Charles Lever

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On the Brink

LUTTRELL OF ARRAN

BY

CHARLES LEVER

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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LUTTRELL OF ARRAN.

CHAPTER I.

A WILD LANDSCAPE.

"One half the world knows not how the other half lives," says the adage; and there is a peculiar force in the maxim when applied to certain remote and little-visited districts in these islands, where the people are about as unknown to us as though they inhabited some lonely rock in the South Pacific.

While the great world, not very far off, busies itself with all the appliances of state and science, amusing its leisure by problems which, once on a time, would have been reserved for the studies of philosophers and sages, these poor creatures drag on an existence rather beneath than above the habits of savage life. Their dwellings, their food, their clothes, such as generations of their fathers possessed; and neither in their culture, their aspirations, nor their ways, advanced beyond what centuries back had seen them.

Of that group of islands off the north-west coast of Ireland called the Arrans, Innishmore is a striking instance of this neglect and desolation. Probably within the wide sweep of the British islands there could not be found a spot more irretrievably given up to poverty and barbarism. Some circular mud hovels, shaped liked beehives, and with a central aperture for the escape of the smoke, are the dwellings of an almost naked, famine-stricken people, whose looks, language, and gestures mark them out for foreigners if they chance to come over to the mainland. Deriving their scanty subsistence almost entirely from fishing and kelp-burning, they depend for life upon the chances of the seasons, in a spot where storms are all but perpetual, and where a day of comparative calm is a rare event.

Curious enough it is to mark that in this wild ungenial spot civilization had once set foot, and some Christian pilgrims found a resting-place. There is no certain record of whence or how they first came, but the Abbey of St. Finbar dates from an early century, and the strong walls yet attest the size and proportions of the ancient monastery. Something like forty years ago the islanders learned that the owner of the island, of whose existence they then heard for the first time, proposed to come over and live there, and soon afterwards a few workmen arrived, and, in some weeks, converted the old crypt of the Abbey into something habitable, adding two small chambers to it, and building a chimney—a work of art—which, whether meant for defence or some religious object, was, during its construction, a much-debated question by the people. The intention to resume a sovereignty which had lain so long in abeyance would have been a bold measure in such a spot if it had not been preceded by the assurance that the chief meant to disturb nothing, dispute nothing of vested interests. They were told that he who was coming was a man weary of the world and its ways, who desired simply a spot of earth where he might live in peace, and where, dying, he might leave his bones with the Luttrells, whose graves for generations back thronged the narrow aisle of the church. These facts, and that he had a sickly wife and one child, a boy of a few years old, were all that they knew of him. If the bare idea of a superior was distasteful in a community where common misery had taught brotherhood, the notion was dispelled at sight of the sad sorrow-stricken man who landed on an evening of September, and walked from the boat through the surf beside his wife, as two sailors carried her to shore. He held his little boy's hand, refusing the many offers that were made to carry him, though the foaming water surged at times above the little fellow's waist, and made him plunge with childish glee and laughter; that infant courage and light-heartedness going farther into the hearts of the wild people than if the father had come to greet them with costly presents!

John Luttrell was not above six-and-thirty, but he looked fifty; his hair was perfectly white, his blue eyes dimmed and circled with dark wrinkles, his shoulders stooped, and his look downcast. Of his wife it could be seen that she had once been handsome, but her wasted figure and incessant cough showed she was in the last stage of consumption. The child was a picture of infantile beauty, and that daring boldness which sits so gracefully on childhood. If he was dressed in the very cheapest and least costly fashion, to the islanders he seemed attired in very splendour, and his jacket of dark crimson cloth and a little feather that he wore in his cap sufficed to win for him the name of the Prince, which he never lost afterward.

It could not be supposed that such an advent would not create a great stir and commotion in the little colony; the ways, the looks, the demeanour, and the requirements of the new comers, furnishing for weeks, and even months, topics for conversation; but gradually this wore itself out. Molly Ryan, the one sole domestic servant who accompanied the Luttrells, being of an uncommunicative temper, contributed no anecdotic details of in-door life to stimulate interest and keep curiosity alive. All that they knew of Luttrell was to meet him in his walks, and receive the short, not over-courteous nod with which he acknowledged their salutations. Of his wife, they only saw the wasted form that half lay, half sat at a window; so that all their thoughts were centred in the child—the Prince—who came familiarly amongst them, uncared for and unheeded by his own, and free to pass his days with the other children as they heaped wood upon the kelp fires, or helped the fishermen to dry their nets upon the shore. In the innocence of their primitive life this familiarity did not trench upon the respect they felt they owed him. They did not regard his presence as anything like condescension, they could not think of it as derogation, but they felt throughout that he was not one of them, and his golden hair and his tiny hands and feet were as unmistakable marks of station as though he wore a coronet or carried a sceptre.

The unbroken melancholy that seemed to mark Luttrell's life, his uncommunicativeness, his want of interest or sympathy in all that went on around him, would have inspired, by themselves, a sense of fear amongst the people; but to these trait were added others that seemed to augment this terror. His days were passed in search of relics and antiquarian objects, of which the Abbey possessed a rich store, and to their simple intelligence these things smacked of magic. To hear the clink of his spade within the walls of the old church by day, and to see the lone light in his chamber, where it was rumoured he sat sleepless throughout the night, were always enough to exact a paternoster and a benediction from the peasant, whose whole religious training began and ended with these offices.

Nor was the child destined to escape the influence of this popular impression. He was rarely at home, and, when there, scarcely noticed or spoken to. His poor sick mother would draw him to her heart, and as she pressed his golden locks close to her, her tears would fall fast upon them, but dreading lest her sorrow should throw a shade over his sunny happiness, she would try to engage him in some out-of-door pursuit again—send him off to ask if the fishermen had taken a full haul, or when some one's new boat would be ready for launching.

Of the room in which the recluse sat, and wherein he alone ever entered, a chance peep through the ivy-covered casement offered nothing very reassuring. It was a narrow, lofty chamber, with a groined roof and a flagged floor, formed of ancient gravestones, the sculptured sides downwards. Two large stuffed seals sat guardwise on either side of the fireplace, over which, on a bracket, was an enormous human skull, an inscription being attached to it, with the reasons for believing its size to be gigantic rather than the consequences of diseased growth. Strange-shaped bones, and arrow-heads, and stone spears and javelins decorated the walls, with amber ornaments and clasps of metal. A massive font served as a washstand, and a broken stone cross formed a coat-rack. In one corner, enclosed by two planks, stood an humble bed, and opposite the fire was the only chair in the chamber—a rude contrivance, fashioned from a root of bog-oak, black with centuries of interment.

It was late at night that Luttrell sat here, reading an old volume, whose parchment cover was stained and discoloured by time. The window was open, and offered a wide view over the sea, on which a faint moonlight shone out at times, and whose dull surging plash broke with a uniform measure on the shore beneath.

Twice had he laid down his book, and, opening the door, stood to listen for a moment, and then resumed his reading; but it was easy to see that the pages did not engage his attention, nor was he able, as he sought, to find occupation in their contents.

At last there came a gentle tap to the door; he arose and opened it. It was the woman-servant who formed his household, who stood tearful and trembling before him.

"Well?" said he, in some emotion.

"Father Lowrie is come," said she, timidly.

He only nodded, as though to say, "Go on."

"And he'll give her the rights," continued she; "but he says he hopes that you'll come over to Belmullet on Sunday, and declare at the altar how it was."

"Declare what?" cried he; and his voice rose to a key of passionate eagerness that was almost a shriek. "Declare what?"

"He means, that you'll tell the people——"

"Send him here to me," broke in Luttrell, angrily. "I'm not going to discuss this with you."

"Sure isn't he giving her the blessed Sacrament!" said she, indignantly.

"Leave me, then—leave me in peace," said he, as he turned away and leaned his head on the chimney-piece; and then, without raising it, added, "and tell the priest to come to me before he goes away."

The woman had not gone many minutes, when a heavy step approached the door, and a strong knock was heard. "Come in!" cried Luttrell, and there entered a short, slightly-made man, middle-aged and active-looking, with bright black eyes, and a tall, straight forehead, to whom Luttrell motioned the only chair as he came forward.

"It's all over, sir. She's in glory!" said he, reverently.

"Without pain?" asked Luttrell.

"A parting pang—no more. She was calm to the last. Indeed, her last words were to repeat what she had pressed so often upon me."

"I know—I know!" broke in Luttrell, impatiently. "I never denied it."

"True, sir; but you never acknowledged it," said the priest, hardily. "When you had the courage to make a peasant girl your wife, you ought to have had the courage to declare it also."

"To have taken her to the court, I hope—to have presented her to royalty—to have paraded my shame and my folly before the world whose best kindness was that it forgot me! Look here, sir; my wife was brought up a Catholic; I never interfered with her convictions. If I never spoke to her on the subject of her faith, it was no small concession from a man who felt on the matter as I did. I sent for you to adminster to her the rights of her Church. but not to lecture me on my duties or my obligations. What I ought to do, and when, I have not to learn from a Roman Catholic priest."

"And yet, sir, it is a Catholic priest will force you to do it. There was no stain on your wife's fame, and there shall be none upon her memory."

"What is the amount of my debt to you, Father Lowrie?" asked Luttrell, calmly and even courteously.

"Nothing, sir; not a farthing. Her father was a good friend to me and mine before ruin overtook him. It wasn't for money I came here to night."

"Then you leave me your debtor, sir, and against my will."

"But you needn't be, Mr. Luttrell," said the priest with eagerness. "She that has just gone, begged and prayed me with her last breath to look after her little boy, and to see and watch that he was not brought up in darkness."

"I understand you. You were to bring him into your own fold. If you hope for success for such a scheme, take a likelier moment, father; this is not your time. Leave me now, I pray you. I have much to attend to."

"May I hope to have an early opportunity to see and talk with you, Mr. Luttrell."

"You shall hear from me, sir, on the matter and early," said

Luttrell. "Your own good feeling will show this is not the moment to press me."

Abashed by the manner in which these last words were spoken, the father bowed low and withdrew.

" Well ? " cried the servant-woman, as he passed out, " will he do it, your reverence ? "

"Not to-day, anyhow, Molly," said he, with a sigh.

How Luttrell sorrowed for the loss of his wife was not known. It was believed that he never passed the threshold of the door where she lay—never went to take one farewell look of her. He sat moodily in his room, going out at times to give certain orders about the funeral, which was to take place on the third day. A messenger had been despatched to his wife's relatives, who lived about seventy miles off, down the coast of Mayo, and to invite them to attend. Of her immediate family none remained. Her father was in banishment, the commutation of a sentence of death. Of her two brothers, one had died on the scaffold, and another had escaped to America, whither her three sisters had followed him ; so that except her uncle, Peter Hogan, and his family, and a half-brother of her mother's a certain Joe Rafter, who kept a shop at Lahinch, there were few to follow her to the grave as mourners.

Peter had four sons and several daughters, three of them married. They were of the class of small farmers, very little above the condition of the cottier ; but they were, as a family a determined, resolute, hard-headed race, not a little dreaded in the neighbourhood where they lived, and well known to be knit together by ties that made an injury to any one of them a feud that the whole family would avenge.

For years and years Luttrell had not seen or even heard of them. He had a vague recollection of having seen Peter Hogan at his marriage, and once or twice afterwards, but preserved no recollection of him. Nothing short of an absolute necessity—for as such he felt it—would have induced him to send for them now ; but he knew well how rigid were popular prejudices, and how impossible it would have been for him to live amongst a people whose most cherished feelings he would have outraged, had he omitted the accustomed honours to the dead.

He told his servant Molly, to do all that was needful on the occasion—to provide for those melancholy festivities which the lower Irish adhere to with a devotion that at once blends their religious ardour with their intensely strong imaginative power.

" There is but one thing I will not bear," said he. " They must not come in upon me. I will see them when they come, and take leave of them when they go ; but they are not to expect me to take any part in their proceedings. Into this room I will suffer none to enter."

"And Master Harry," said the woman, wiping her eyes with her apron—"what's to be done with him? 'Tis two days that he's there, and he won't leave the corpse."

"It's a child's sorrow, and will soon wear itself out."

"Ay, but it's killing him!" said she, tenderly—"it's killing him in the meanwhile."

"He belongs to a tough race," said he with a bitter smile, "that neither sorrow nor shame ever killed. Leave the boy alone, and he'll come to himself the sooner."

The peasant woman felt almost sick in her horror at such a sentiment, and she moved towards the door to pass out.

"Have you thought of everything, Molly?" asked he, more mildly.

"I think so, sir. There's to be twenty-eight at the wake—twenty-nine, if Mr. Rafter comes; but we don't expect him—and Father Lowrie would make thirty; but we've plenty for them all."

"And when will this—this feasting—take place?"

"The night before the funeral, by coorse," said the woman.

"And they will all leave this the next morning, Molly?"

"Indeed I suppose they will, sir," said she, no less offended at the doubt than at the inhospitable meanness of the question.

"So be it, then!" said he, with a sigh. "I have nothing more to say."

"You know, sir," said she, with a great effort at courage, "that they'll expect your Honour will go in for a minute or two—to drink their healths, and say a few words to them?"

He shook his head in dissent, but said nothing.

"The Hogans is as proud a stock as any in Mayo, sir," said she, eagerly, "and if they thought it was any disrespect to her that was gone——"

"Hold your tongue, woman," cried he, impatiently. "She was my wife, and *I* know better what becomes her memory than these ignorant peasants. Let there be no more of this;" and he closed the door after her as she went out, and turned the key in it, in token that he would not brook more disturbance.

* * *

CHAPTER II.

A YACHTING PARTY.

In a beautiful little bay on the north-east of Innishmore, landlocked on all sides but the entrance, a handsome schooner yacht dropped her anchor just as the sun was setting. Amidst the desolate grandeur of those wild cliffs, against which the sea surged and plashed till the very rocks were smooth worn, that graceful little craft, with her tall and taper spars, and all her trim adjuncts, seemed a strange vision. It was the contrast of civilization with barbarism; they were the two poles of what are most separated in life—wealth and poverty.

The owner was a baronet, a certain Sir Gervais Vyner—one of those spoiled children of Fortune which England alone rears; for while in other lands high birth and large fortune confer their distinctive advantages, they do not tend, as they do with us, to great social eminence, and even political influence. Vyner had got almost every prize in this world's lottery; all, indeed, but one; his only child was a daughter, and this was the drop that sufficed to turn to bitterness much of that cupful of enjoyment Fate had offered to his lips. He had seen a good deal of life—done a little of everything—on the turf—in the hunting-field—on the floor of the House he had what was called "held his own." He was, in fact, one of those accomplished, well-mannered, well-looking people, who, so long as not pushed by any inordinate ambition into a position of undue importance, invariably get full credit for all the abilities they possess, and, what is better still, attract no ill-will for the possessing them. As well as having done everything, he had been everywhere: up the Mediterranean, up the Baltic, into the Black Sea, up the St. Lawrence—everywhere but to Ireland—and now, in a dull autumn, when too late for a distant tour, he had induced his friend Grenfell to accompany him in a short cruise, with a distinct pledge that they were not to visit Dublin, or any other of those cognate cities of which Irishmen are vain, but which to Mr. George Grenfell represented all that was an outrage on good taste, and an insult to civilization. Mr. Grenfell, in one word, entertained for Ireland and the Irish sentiments that wouldn't have been thought very complimentary if applied to Fejee islanders, with certain hopeless forebodings as to the future that even Fejee itself might have resented as unfair.

Nobody knew why these two men were friends, but they were so. They seemed utterly unsuited in every way. Vyner loved travel, incident, adventure, strange lands, and strange people; he liked the very emergencies, the roughings of the road. Grenfell was a Londoner, who only tolerated, and not very patiently, whatever was beyond an easy drive of Hyde Park Corner. Vyner was a man of good birth, and had high connections on every side—advantages of which he no more dreamed of being vain, than of the air he breathed. Mr. Grenfell was a nobody, with the additional disparagement of being a nobody that every one knew. Grenfell's Italian warehouse, Grenfell's potted meats, his pickled salmon, his caviare, his shrimps, his olives, and his patent maccaroni, being European in celebrity, and, though the means by which his father made an enormous fortune, were miseries which poisoned life, rising spectre-like before him on every dinner-table and staring at him in great capitals in every supplement of the *Times*. He would have changed his name, but he knew well that it would have availed him nothing. The disguise would only have invited discovery, and the very mention of him exacted the explanation, "No more a Seymour nor a Villiers than you are; the fellow is old Grenfell's son; 'Grenfell's Game Sauce,' and the rest of it." A chance resemblance to a fashionable Earl suggested another expedient, and Mr. George Grenfell got it about—how, it is not easy to say—that the noble Lord had greatly admired his mother, and paid her marked attention at Scarborough. Whatever pleasure Mr. George Grenfell felt in this theory is not easy to explain; nor have we to explain what we simply narrate as a fact, without the slightest pretension to account for.

Such were the two men who travelled together, and the yacht also contained Vyner's daughter, Ada, a little girl of eight, and her governess, Mademoiselle Heinzleman, a Hanoverian lady, who claimed a descent from the Hohenzollerns, and had pride enough for a Hapsburg. If Vyner and Grenfell were not very much alike in tastes, temperament, and condition, Grenfell and the German governess were positively antipathies; nor was their war a secret or a smouldering fire, but a blaze, to which each brought fuel every day, aiding the combustion by every appliance of skill and ingenuity.

Vyner loved his daughter passionately—not even the disappointment that she had not been a boy threw any cloud over his affection—and he took her with him when and wherever he could; and, indeed, the pleasure of having her for a companion now made this little home tour one of the most charming of all his excursions, and in her childish delight at new scenes and new people he renewed all his own memories of early travel.

"Here you are, sir," said Mr. Crab, late a sailing-master in the Royal Navy, but now in command of *The Meteor*—"here you are;" and he pointed with his finger to a little bay on the outspread chart that covered the cabin table. "This is about it! It may be either of these two; each of them looks north—north by east—and each has this large mountain to the south'ard and west'ard."

"'The north islands of Arran,' read out Vyner, slowly, from a little MS. note-book. 'Innishmore, the largest of them, has several good anchorages, especially on the eastern side, few inhabitants, and all miserably poor. There is the ruin of an Abbey, and a holy well of great reputed antiquity, and a strange relic of ancient superstition called the Judgment-stone, on which he who lays his hand while denouncing a wrong done him by another, brings down divine vengeance on either his enemy or himself, according as his allegation is just or unjust. There is something similar to be found in the Brehon laws——'"

"For mercy's sake don't give us more of that tiresome little book, which, from the day we sailed, has never contributed one single hint as to where we could find anything to eat, or even water fit to drink," said Grenfell. "Do you mean to go on shore in this barbarous place?"

"Of course I do. Crab intends us to pass two days here; we have sprung our foretopmast, and must look to it."

"Blessed invention a yacht! As a means of locomotion, there's not a cripple but could beat it; and as a place to live in, to eat, sleep, wash, and exercise, there's not a cell in Brixton is not a palace in comparison."

"Mademoiselle wish to say good-night, Sare Vyner," said the governess, a tall, fair haired lady, with very light eyes, thick lips, and an immense lower jaw, a type, but not a flattering type, of German physiognomy.

"Let her come by all means;" and in an instant the door burst open, with the spring of a young fawn the little girl was fast locked in her father's arms.

"Oh, is it not very soon to go to bed, papa dearest?" cried she; "and it would be so nice to wait a little and see the moon shining on these big rocks here."

"What does Mademoiselle Heinzleman say?" asked Vyner, smiling at the eager face of the child.

The lady appealed to made no other reply than by the production of a great silver watch with an enormous dial.

"That is a real curiosity," cried Grenfell. "Is it permissible to ask a nearer view of that remarkable clock, Miss Heinzleman?"

"Freilich!" said she, not suspecting the slightest trace of raillery in the request. "It was made at Wurtzburg, by Jacob Schmelling, year time 1736."

"And intended probably, for the Town-hall?"

"No, Saar," replied she, detecting the covert sneer; "intended for him whose arms it bear, Gottfried von Heinzleman, Burgomeister of Wurtzburg, a German noble, who neither made sausages nor sold Swiss cheeses."

"Good-night! good-night! my own darling!" said Vyner, kissing his child affectionately. "You shall have a late evening to-morrow, and a walk in the moonlight, too;" and after a hearty embrace from the little girl, and a respectful curtsey from the governess, returned with a not less respectful deference on his own part, Vyner closed the door after them, and resumed his seat.

"What cursed tempers those Germans have," said Grenfell, trying to seem careless and easy; "even that good-natured joke about her watch she must take amiss."

"Don't forget, George," said Vyner, good humouredly, "that in any little passage of arms between you, you have the strong position, and hers is the weak one."

"I wish *she* would have the kindness to remember that fact, but she is an aggressive old damsel, and never looks so satisfied as when she imagines she has said an impertinence."

"She is an excellent governess, and Ada is very fond of her."

"So much the worse for Ada."

"What do you mean by that?" cried Vyner, with an energy that surprised the other.

"Simply this; that by a man who professes to believe that objects of beauty are almost as essential to be presented to the eyes of childhood as maxims of morality, such a choice in a companion for his daughter is inexplicable. The woman is ugly, her voice discordant and jarring, her carriage and bearing atrocious —and will you tell me that all these will fail to make their impression when associated with every tone and every incident of childhood?"

"You are not in your happiest mood to-night, George. Was the claret bad?"

"I drank none of it. I took some of that Moselle cup, and it was tolerably good. By the way, when and how are we to get some ice? Carter says we have very little left."

"Perhaps there may be glaciers in the wild region beside us. Ireland and Iceland have only a consonant between them. What if we go ashore and have a look at the place?"

A careless shrug of assent was the answer, and soon afterwards the trim yawl, manned by four stout fellows, skimmed across the smooth bay, and landed Vyner and his friend on a little rocky promontory that formed a natural pier.

It was complete desolation on every side of them: the mountain which rose from the sea was brown and blue with moss and heather, but not a human habitation, not an animal marked its side; a few sea-birds skimmed fearlessly across the water, or stood perched on peaks of rock close to the travellers, and a large seal heavily plunged into the depth as they landed; save these, not a sign of anything living could be seen.

"There is something very depressing in this solitude," said Grenfell; "I detest these places where a man is thrown back upon himself."

"Do you know, then, that at this very moment I was speculating on buying a patch of land here to build a cottage; a cabin of three or four rooms, where one might house himself if ever he came this way."

"But why should he come this way? What on earth should turn any man's steps twice in this direction?"

"Come, come, George! You'll not deny that all this is very fine: that great mountain rising abruptly from the sea, with narrow belt of yellow beach below it; those wild fantastic rocks, with their drooping seaweed; those solemn caves, wherein the rumbling sea rushes to issue forth again in some distant cleft, are all objects of grandeur and beauty, and, for myself, I feel as if I could linger for days amongst them unwearied."

"What was that?" cried Grenfell, as they now gained a crest of the ridge, and could see a wild irregular valley that lay beneath, the shades of evening deepening into very blackness the lower portions of the landscape. "Was that thunder or the roar of the sea? There it is again!"

They listened for a few moments, and again there came, borne on the faint land-breeze, a sound that swelled from a feeble wail to a wild sustained cry, rising and falling till it died away just as it had begun. It was indescribably touching, and conveyed a sense of deep sorrow, almost of despair. It might have been the last cry of a sinking crew as the waves closed above them; and so indeed did it seem to Vyner as he said—

"If there had been a storm at sea, I'd have sworn that sound came from a shipwreck."

"I suppose it is only some other pleasant adjunct of the charming spot you would select for a villa," said Grenfell; "perhaps the seals or the grampuses are musical."

"Listen to that!" cried Vyner, laying a hand on his arm; "and see! yonder—far away to the left—there is a light!"

"Well, if there be inhabitants here, I'm not astonished that they cry over it."

"Let us find out what it can mean, George."

"Have you any arms about you? I have left my revolver behind, and have nothing but this sword-cane."

"I have not as much, and feel pretty sure we shall not need it. Every traveller in Ireland, even in the remotest tracts, bears witness to the kindness which is extended to the stranger."

"They who come back from the Rocky Mountains are invariably in love with the Sioux Indians. The testimony that one wants is from the fellows who have been scalped."

"What an intense prejudice you have against all that is Irish!"

"Say, if you like, that I have a prejudice against all mock cordiality, mock frankness, mock hospitality, and mock intrepidity."

"Stay, George! you can't impugn their courage."

"I don't want to impugn anything beyond the inordinate pretensions to be something better, braver, more amiable, and more gifted than all the rest of the world. I say, Vyner, I have had quite enough of this sort of walking; my feet are cut to pieces with these sharp stones, and every second step is into a puddle. Do you mean to go on?"

"Certainly; I am determined to see what that light means."

"Then I turn back. I'll send the boat in again, and tell them to hoist a lantern, which, if the natives have not done for you in the meanwhile, you'll see on the beach."

"Come along; don't be lazy."

"It's not laziness. I could walk a Parisian Boulevard for these three hours; what I object to is, the certainty of a cold, and the casualty of a sprained ankle. A pleasant journey to you;" and as he spoke, he turned abruptly round, and began to retrace his steps.

Vyner looked after him; he called after him too, for a moment, but, as the other never heeded, he lighted a fresh cigar and continued his way.

The light, which seemed to tremble and flicker at first, shone steadily and brightly as he drew nearer, and at length he hit upon a sort of pathway which greatly assisted his advance. The way, too, led gradually downwards, showing that the glen or valley was far deeper than he at first supposed it. As he went on, the moon, a faint crescent, came out, and showed him the gable of an old ruin rising above some stunted trees, through whose foliage, at times, he fancied he saw the glitter of a light. These lay in a little cleft that opened to the sea, and on the shore, drawn up, were two boats, on whose sides the cold moonlight shone clearly.

"So, there are people who live here!" thought he; "perhaps Grenfell was right. It might have been as well to have come armed!" He hesitated to go on. Stories of wreckers, tales of wild and lawless men in remote untravelled lands, rose to his mind, and he half doubted if it were prudent to proceed farther. Half ashamed of his fears, half dreading the bantering he was sure to meet from Grenfell, he went forward. The path led to a small river where stepping-stones were placed, and crossing this, the foot track became broader, and evidently had been more travelled. The night was now perfectly still and calm, the moonlight touched the mountain towards its peak, but all beneath was in sombre blackness, more especially near the old church, whose ruined gable his eyes, as they grew familiarised with the darkness, could clearly distinguish. Not a sound of that strange unearthly dirge that he first heard was audible; all was silent; so silent, indeed, that he was startled by the sharp crackling of the tall reeds which grew close to the path, and which he occasionally broke as he pressed forward. The path stopped abruptly at a stone stile, over which he clambered, and found himself in a little enclosure planted with potatoes, beyond which was a dense copse of thorns and hazel, so tangled that the path became very tortuous and winding. On issuing from this, he found himself in front of a strong glare of light, which issued from a circular window of the gable several feet above his head, at the same time that he heard a sort of low monotonous moaning sound, broken at intervals by a swell of chorus, which he at length detected was the response of people engaged in prayer. Creeping stealthily around through dockweeds and nettles, he at last found a narrow loopholed window to which his hands could just reach, and to which, after a brief effort, he succeeded in lifting himself. The scene on which he now looked never faded from his memory. In the long narrow aisle of the old Abbey a company of men and women sat two deep round the walls, the space in the centre being occupied by a coffin placed on trestles; rude torches of bog-pine stuck in the walls threw a red and lurid glare over the faces, and lit up their expressions with a vivid distinctness. At the head of the coffin sat an old grey-headed man of stern and formidable look, and an air of savage determination, which even grief had not softened; and close beside him on a low stool, sat a child, who, overcome by sleep as it seemed, had laid his head on the old man's knee, and slept profoundly. From this old man proceeded the low muttering words which the others answered by a sort of chant, the only interruption to which was when any one of the surrounders would rise from his place to deposit some small piece of money on a plate which stood on the coffin, and was meant to contain the offerings for the priest. If the language they spoke in was strange and unintelligible to Vyner's ears, it did not the less convey, as the sound of Irish unfailingly does to all unaccustomed ears, a something terribly energetic and passionate—every accent was striking, and every tone full of power—but far more still was he struck by the faces on every side. He had but seen the Irish of St. Giles's; the physiognomy he alone knew was that blended one of sycophancy and dissipation that a degraded and demoralized class wear. He had never before seen that fierce vigour and concentrated earnestness which mark the native face. Still less had he any idea what its expression could become when heightened by religious fervour. There were fine features, noble foreheads wide and spacious, calm brows, and deeply-set eyes, in many around, but in all were the lower jaw and mouth coarse and depraved-looking. There was no lack of power, it is true, but it was a power that could easily adapt itself to violence and cruelty, and when they spoke, so overmastering seemed this impulse of their nature, that the eyes lost the gentleness they had worn, and flashed with an angry and vindictive brilliancy.

Drink was served round at intervals, and freely partaken of, and from the gestures and vehemence of the old man, Vyner conjectured that something like toasts were responded to. At moments, too, the prayers for the dead would seem to be forgotten, and brief snatches of conversation would occur, and even joke and laughter were heard; when suddenly, as though to recall them to the solemn rites of the hour, a voice, always a woman's, would burst in with a cry, at first faint, but gradually rising till it became a wild yell, at one particular cadence of which—just as one has seen a spaniel howl at a certain note—the rest would seem unable to control themselves, and break in with a rush of sound that made the old walls ring again. Dreadful as it had seemed before, it was far more fearful now, as he stood close by, and could mark, besides, the highly-wrought expressions of the terribly passionate faces around.

So fascinated was he by the scene—so completely had its terrible reality impressed him—that Vyner could not leave the spot, and he gazed till he knew, and for many a long year after could remember, every face that was there. More than once was he disposed to venture in amongst them, and ask, as a stranger the privilege of joining the solemnity, but fear withheld him; and as the first pinkish streak of dawn appeared, he crept cautiously down and alighted on the grass.

By the grey half-light he could now see objects around him, and perceive that the Abbey was a small structure with little architectural pretensions, though from the character of the masonry of very great age. At one end, where a square tower of evidently later date stood, something like an attempt at a dwelling-house existed—at least, two windows of unequal size appeared, and a low doorway, the timbers of which had once formed part of a ship. Passing round the angle of this humble home, he saw a faint streak of light issue from an open casement, over which a wild honeysuckle had grown, attaching itself to the iron bars that guarded the window, and almost succeeded in shutting out the day. Curious for a glance within this strange dwelling-place, Vyner stole near and peeped in. A tiny oil-lamp on a table was the only light, but it threw its glare on the face of a man asleep in a deep arm-chair—a pale, careworn, melancholy face it was, with a mass of white hair unkempt hanging partly across it. Vyner passed his hands across his eyes as though to satisfy himself that he was awake. He looked again; he even parted the twigs of the honeysuckle to give him more space, and as he gazed, the sleeper turned slightly, so that the full features came to view.

"Good God! It is Luttrell!" muttered Vyner, as he quietly stole away and set out for the beach.

Anxious at his long absence, two of his crew had come in search of him, and in their company he returned to the shore and went on board.

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD STORY.

It was late in the day when Vyner awoke and got up. Late as it was, he found Grenfell at breakfast. Seated under an awning on the deck, before a table spread with every luxury, that much-to-be-pitied individual was, if not watering his bread with tears, sipping his chocolate with chagrin. "He had no newspaper!"—no broad sheet of gossip, with debates, divorces, bankruptcies and defalcations—no moral lessons adminstered to foreign kings and kaisers, to show them how the press of England had its eye on them, and would not fail to expose their short-comings to that great nation, which in the succeeding leader was the text for a grand pæan over increased revenue and augmented exports.

Grenfell had a very natural taste for this sort of reading. It supplied to him, as to many others, a sort of patent patriotism, which, like his father's potted meats could be carried to any climate, and be always fresh.

"Is not this a glorious day, George?" said Vyner, as he came on deck. "There is something positively exhilarating in the fresh and heath-scented air of that great mountain."

"I'd rather follow a watering-cart down Piccadilly, if I was on the look-out for a sensation. How long are we to be moored in this dreary spot?"

"Not very long. Don't be impatient, and listen while I recount to you my adventure of last night."

"Let me fill my pipe, then. Carter, fetch me my meerschaum. Now for it," said he, as he disposed his legs on an additional chair. "I only hope the story has no beautiful traits of Irish peasant life, for I own to no very generous dispositions with regard to these interesting people, when I see the place they live in."

Not in the slightest degree moved by the other's irritability, Vyner began a narrative of his ramble, with all the power that a recent impression could impart of the scene of the wake, and pictured graphically enough the passion-wrought faces and wild looks of the mourners.

"I was coming away at last," said he, "when, on turning an angle of the old church, I found myself directly in front of a little window, from which a light issued. I crept close and peeped in, and there, asleep in a large arm-chair, was a man I once knew well—as well, or even better than I know you—a man I had chummed with at Christ Church, and lived for years with on terms of close affection. If it were not that his features were such as never can be forgotten, I might surely have failed to recognize him, for though my own contemporary, he looked fully fifty."

"Who was he?" abruptly broke in Grenfell.

"You shall hear. Luttrell!"

"Luttrell! Luttrell! You don't mean the fellow who was to have married your sister-in-law?"

"The same; the first man of his day at Christ Church, the great prizeman and medallist, 'the double first,' and what many thought more of, the best looking fellow in Oxford."

"I forget the story. He wanted to marry some one, and she wouldn't have him. What was it?"

"He wanted to marry my wife," said Vyner, rather nettled at the cool carelessness of the other. "She was, however, engaged to me, and she said, 'I have a sister so very like me, that we are constantly taken for each other; come here next week, and you'll meet her.' They met, liked each other, and were contracted to be married. I want to be very brief, so I shall skip over all but the principal points."

"Do so," said the other, dryly.

"Everything went well for a time. All inquiries as to his fortune, position, connections, and so forth, were found satisfactory by the Courtenays, when some busybody whispered to Georgina that there was an ugly story about him in Ireland, and suggested that she should ask under what circumstances he had quitted the Irish University and come over to take his degree at Oxford. Luttrell was considerably agitated when the question was put to him, though they were alone at the time; and, after a brief pause with himself, he said, 'I'd rather you had not asked me about this, but I meant to have told you of it myself, one day. The thing is very simple, and not very serious. The only thing, however, I exact is, that the confession is to and for yourself alone. You have a right to know the fact; I have a right, that it be kept a secret.'

"She gave the pledge he required, and he went on to say that there existed in Ireland a secret society known by the name of the United Irishmen whose designs were, time and place suiting, to throw off their allegiance to England, and declare for Irish independence. This association was so far formidable, that it embraced men of all classes and conditions, and men of all religious professions, the majority being Presbyterians. He was one of these, and a very foremost one; drawn into the league, in reality, rather by the warm enthusiasm of a generous nature than by any mature consideration of the object or its consequences. In some contest for a prize at College, a gold medal in science, I believe—Luttrell's closest competitor was the son of the Provost of the University; but, after a three days' conflict, Luttrell presented himself at the Hall to receive his laurels, but what was his astonishment to hear, as he entered, that he would be first required to subscribe a declaration that he was not a member of any secret or treasonable society.

"'If you mean,' cried he, to the Proctor, who recited the terms of the declaration—'if you mean me to say that I am not a United Irishman, I will not do so. Give your gold medal to that gentleman yonder,' added he, pointing to the son of the Provost; 'his father's loyalty deserves every testimony you can confer on it.' He left the Hall, took his name off the books, and quitted Ireland the next day. It was gravely debated whether an expulsion should not be passed upon him; but, in consideration of his great collegiate distinction and his youth, the extreme rigour was spared him, and he was suffered to leave uncensured.

"Either the confession was not what she had expected, or that she fancied it might cover something far more serious beneath it, but Georgina was not satisfied with the story. She again and again reverted to it. Not a day that they walked out alone that she would not turn the conversation on this theme, which, by frequent discussion, Luttrell came at length to talk of, without any of the reserve he at first maintained. Indeed, some of this was, in a measure, forced upon him, for she questioned him closely as to the details of the association, how far it involved him, and to what extent he was yet bound by its obligations.

"It was in a sort of defence of himself, one day, that he so far forgot prudence as to declare that the society numbered amongst its members many men not only high in station, but actually regarded as strong adherents of the English party. He told how this, that, and the other, who were seen at every levee of the Castle, and not unfrequently quoted as guests of the Viceroy's table, were brothers of this league; and he indeed mentioned names of distinction and eminence.

"In her eagerness to confute all her father's opinions on this matter—for she had told him the whole story from the first—Georgina hastened off to enumerate the great men who were engaged in this treason. Two were in Parliament, one was a Law Adviser of the Crown, another was a Commissioner of Customs, and generally regarded as an active partisan of the Government. I remember these, but there were many others of equal note. Mr. Courtenay, who besides being a ministerial supporter, had once been private secretary to Lord Castlereagh, divulged the whole to the Home Secretary. Investigations were instituted, and, although United Irishism had lost its sting after Emmett's failure, all who had once belonged to it were marked men, and black-listed in consequence.

"I have been told that the consternation which the disclosure created in Ireland was terrific. Men resigned their commissions of the peace, pretended ill-health, went abroad; lawyers and physicians of eminence were ashamed to show their faces; and a well-known editor of a violently 'English' newspaper disposed of his journal and went to America. 'Who is the traitor?' was now the universal demand; and, indeed, in the patriotic papers the question stood forth every morning in great capitals.

"'Who was the traitor?' none could positively assert; but the controversy was carried on without any squeamish delicacy, and if the papers did not fix on the man, they very freely discussed the probability or improbability of this or that one.

"'Why not Luttrell?' said one writer in a famous print. 'His father betrayed us before.' This was an allusion to his having voted for the Union. 'Why not Luttrell?' They entered thereupon into some curious family details, to show

how these Luttrells had never been 'true blue' to any cause. That, with good abilities and fair prospects, they were not successful men, just because they couldn't be honest to their party, or even to themselves. They were always half way between two opinions, 'and,' as the writer said, 'far more eager to have two roads open to them, than to travel either of them.' Whether excited by a theme which had engrossed much of public attention, or incited by some personal animosity, this editor devoted a portion of each days' paper to Luttrell. The result was a hostile message. They met and exchanged shots, when the newspaper writer at once declared, 'If Mr. Luttrell will now disown any connection with this act of betrayal, I am ready to beg his pardon for all that I have said of him.' Luttrell for a moment made no reply, and then said, 'Take your pistol, sir; I have no explanations to make you.' At the next fire, Luttrell fell wounded. He was upwards of two months laid in his bed. I saw him frequently during that time; and though we talked every day of the Courtenays, I had not the courage to tell him that they were determined the match should be broken off. Georgina herself—how, I cannot well say, nor ever clearly understood—being brought to believe that Luttrell had done what would for ever exclude him from the society of his equals. I cannot dwell on a period so full of miserable recollections. I never passed so many hours of torture as when sitting by that poor fellow's bedside. I listened to all his bright projects for a future which in my heart I knew was closed to him for ever. As his convalescence advanced, my task grew more difficult. He used to ask every day when he would be permitted to write to her; he wondered, too, why she had not sent him a few lines, or some token—as a book, or a flower. He questioned and cross questioned me about her daily life; how she felt his misfortune; had she received a correct account of the incident of the duel; what her family thought and said; and, last of all, why Mr. Courtenay himself had only called once or twice, and never asked to come up and see him.

"My own marriage was to take place early in May. It was now April; and at one time there had been some talk of the two sisters being married on the same day. It was late in the month; I am not clear about the date, but I remember it was on a Sunday morning. I was sitting with him, and he lay propped up on the sofa, to enable him to take his breakfast with me. 'I was thinking all last night, Vyner,' said he—'and nothing but a sick man's selfishness could have prevented my thinking it long ago—how you must hate *me*.'

"'Hate *you*, and why?'

"'Because but for me and my misfortune you'd have been married by the sixth or seventh, and now, who knows how long you must wait?'

"I saw at once that the double marriage was running in his mind. and though my own was fixed for the following Thursday or Friday, I had not nerve to say so; nor was my embarrassment the less that Mr. Courtenay had charged me with the task of telling Luttrell that all should be considered as at an end, and every day used to question me if I had yet done so.

"'Now or never,' thought I, as Luttrell said this; but when I turned and saw his wasted cheek, still pink with hectic, and his glassy, feverish eye, I shrunk again from the attempt.

"'Why did you look at me so pitifully, Vyner?' said he, eagerly: 'has the doctor told you that I shall not rub through?'

"'Nothing of the kind, man; he says he'll have you down at Hastings before a fortnight is over.'

"'What was it, then? Do I look very fearfully?'

"'Not even that. You are pulled down, of course. No man looks the better for eight or ten weeks on a sick-bed.'

"'Then it is something else,' said he, thoughtfully; and I made no answer.

"'Well,' said he, with a deep sigh, 'I have had my forebodings of—I don't know what—but of something that was over me all this time back; and when I lay awake at night, wondering in what shape this disaster would come, I have ever consoled myself by saying "Well, Vyner certainly does not know it; Vyner has no suspicion of it. If now, however, I were to be wrong in this; if, in reality, Vyner *did* know that a calamity impended me; and if'—here he fixed his bright staring eyes with their wide pupils full upon me—'if Vyner knew something, and only forbore to break it to me because he saw me a poor sickly wasted creature, whose courage he doubted, all I can say is, he does not know the stuff the Luttrells are made of.'

"I tried to answer this, but all I could do was to take his hand and press it between my own. 'Out with it, like a good fellow,' cried he, with an effort to seem gay—'out with it, and you'll see whether I am too vain of my pluck!'

"I turned partly away—at least so far that I could not see his face nor he mine—and I told him everything. I cannot remember how I began or ended. I cannot tell what miserable attempts I made to excuse or to palliate, nor what poor ingenuity I practised to make him believe that all was for the best. I only know that I would have given worlds that he should have interrupted me or questioned me; but he never spoke a word, and when I had concluded he sat there still in silence.

"'You are a man of honour, Vyner,' said he, in a low but unshaken voice that thrilled through my heart. 'Tell me one thing. On your word as a gentlemen, has—has—she——' I saw that he was going to say the name, but stopped himself. 'Has she been coerced in this affair?'

"'I believe not. I sincerely believe not. In discussing the matter before her, she has gradually come to see, or at least to suppose——'

"'There, there, that will do!' cried he aloud, and with a full tone that resembled his voice in health. 'Let us talk of it no more. I take it you'll go abroad after your wedding?'

"I muttered out some stupid common-place, I talked away at random for some minutes, and at last I said good-bye. When I came back the next morning he was gone. He had been carried on board of a steam-vessel for some port in the south of Ireland, and left not a line nor a message behind him. From that hour until last night I never set eyes on him."

"You have heard of him, I suppose?" asked Grenfell.

"Vaguely and at long intervals. He would seem to have mixed himself up with the lowest political party in Ireland—men who represent, in a certain shape, the revolutionary section in France—and though the very haughtiest aristocrat I think I ever knew, and at one time the most fastidious 'fine gentleman,' there were stories of his having uttered the most violent denunciations of rank, and inveighed in all the set terms of the old French Convention against the distinctions of class. Last of all, I heard that he had married a peasant girl, the daughter of one of his cottier tenants, and that, lost to all sense of his former condition, had become a confirmed drunkard."

"The moral of all which is, that your accomplished sister-in-law had a most fortunate escape."

"I'm not so sure of that. I think Luttrell was a man to have made a great figure in the world. He swept college of its prizes, he could do anything he tried, and, unlike many other clever men, he had great powers of application. He had, too, high ability as a public speaker, and in an age like ours, where oratory does so much, he might have had a most brilliant career in Parliament."

"There is nothing more delusive than arguing from a fellow's school or collegiate successes to his triumphs in after life. The first are purely intellectual struggles; but the real battle of life is fought out by tact, and temper, and courage, and readiness, and fifty other things, that have no distinct bearing on mind. Your man there would have failed just as egregiously amongst gentlemen as he has done amongst the 'canaille' that he descended to. He had failure written on his passport when he started in life."

"I don't believe it; I can't believe it."

"Your sister-in-law, I think, never married."

"No. She has refused some excellent offers, and has declared she never will marry."

"How like a woman all that! She first mars a man's fortune, and, by way of reparation, she destroys her own. That is such feminine logic!"

"Is that a dog they have got in the bow of the launch, yonder?" said Vyner, directing the captain's attention to one of the boats of the yacht that was now pulling briskly out from the land.

"Well, sir, as well as I can make out, it's a child," said he, as he drew the telescope from the slings and began to adjust it. "Yes, sir, it's a native they have caught, and a wild-looking specimen too;" and he handed the glass to Vyner.

"Poor little fellow! He seems dressed in rabbit-skins. Where is Ada? She must see him."

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD.

"It was not an easy matter to get him to come, sir," said the sailor in a whisper to Vyner, as he assisted the boy to get on the deck.

"Where did you find him?"

"Sitting all alone on that rocky point yonder, sir; he seemed to have been crying, and we suspect he has run away from home."

Vyner now turned to look at the child, who all this while stood calm and composed, amazed, it is true, by all he saw around him, yet never suffering his curiosity to surprise him into a word of astonishment. In age from ten to twelve, he was slightly though strongly built, and carried himself erect as a soldier. The dress which Vyner at first thought was entirely made of skins was only in reality trimmed with these, being an attempt to make the clothes he had long worn sufficiently large for him. His cap alone was of true island make, and was a conical contrivance of undressed seal-skin, which really had as savage a look as need be.

"Do you live on this island, my little fellow?" asked Vyner, with a kindly accent.

"Yes," said he, calmly, as he looked up full into his face.

"And have you always lived here?"

"So long as I remember."

"Where do you live?"

"On the other side of the mountain—at St. Finbar's Abbey."

"May I ask your name?"

"My name," said the boy, proudly, "is Harry Grenville Luttrell."

"Are you a Luttrell?" cried Vyner, as he laid his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder; but the little fellow seemed not to like the familiarity, and stepped back to escape it.

"Are you the son of John Hamilton Luttrell?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

"Mine," said the other, repressing a smile—"mine is Gervaise Vyner."

"And do you own this ship?"

"Yes."

"And why have you come here?"

"Partly by chance—partly through curiosity."

"And when will you go away?"

"Something will depend on the weather—something on whether we like the place and find it agreeable to us; but why do you ask? Do you wish we should go away?"

"The people do! I do not care!"

It is not easy to give an idea of the haughty dignity with which he spoke the last words. They were like the declaration of one who felt himself so secure in station, that he could treat the accidents of the day as mere trifles.

"But why should the people wish it? We are not very likely to molest or injure them."

"That much you may leave to themselves," said the boy, insolently. "They'll not let you do it."

"You seem very proud of your island, my little man. Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"No—none."

"None belonging to you but father and mother?"

"I have no mother now," said he, with an effort to utter the words unmoved; but the struggle was too much, and he had to turn away his head as he tried to suppress the sobbing that overcame him.

"I am very, very sorry to have pained you, my boy," said Vyner, with kindness. "Come down with me here, and see a little daughter of mine, who is nearly your own age."

"I don't want to see her. I want to go ashore."

"So you shall, my boy; but you will eat something with us first, and see the strange place we live in. Come along;" and he took his hand to lead him forward.

"I could swim to the land if I liked," said the boy, as he gazed down at the blue water.

"But you'll not have to swim, Harry."

"Why do you call me Harry? I never knew *you*."

"I have a better claim than you suspect. At least, I used to call your father John long ago."

"Don't do it any more then," said he, defiantly.

"And why?"

"He wouldn't bear it—that is the why! Stand clear, there!" cried he to one of the sailors on the gangway. "I'm off!" and he prepared himself for a run ere he jumped overboard, but just at this moment Ada tripped up the cabin ladder and stood before him. The long yellow ringlets fell on her shoulders and her neck, and her lustrous blue eyes were wide in astonishment at the figure in front of her. As for the boy, he gazed at her as at something of unearthly beauty. It was to his eyes that Queen of the Fairies who might have soared on a light cloud or tripped daintily on the crest of the wide sea waves.

"Here is a playfellow for you, Ada," said her father, as he led her towards him.

"It is Robinson Crusoe, papa," said she, in a whisper.

The boy's quick ear had, however, caught the words, and he said quickly, "I wish I was Robinson!" the speech seemed to strike some chord in the little girl's heart, for she went freely towards him at once, and said, "Oh, wasn't it nice to live in that pretty island, and have everything one's own?"

"This island here is mine!" said the boy, proudly.

"Yes, Ada," said Vyner, "what he says is quite correct; his father owns the whole of these islands. But come along into the cabin, Harry; I want you to see our home, though it is a very narrow one."

With the gravity of a North American Indian, and with a self-possession that never broke down under every trial to which curiosity exposed it, the boy looked at all around him. If Aladdin himself was not more wonder-struck at the splendours of the cave, he never for a moment betrayed his amazement. He ate and drank, too, with the same air of composure, and bore himself throughout with a quiet dignity that was remarkable. Ada displayed before him her prettiest toys, her games, and her picture-books, and was half piqued at the little evidences of astonishment they created. No suspicion crossed her mind how the colour that came and went and came again, how the hurried breathing, how the clammy fingers that trembled as they touched an object, were signs of emotion far deeper and more intense than all that a cry of wonderment could evidence.

"I suppose," said she, at last when impatience mastered her, "you have got such masses of these yourself, that you don't care for them?"

"I—I have nothing—nothing but a crossbow to shoot the sea-gulls, and a hatchet, and the hatchet is too heavy for me."

"But what can you do with a hatchet?" asked she, smiling.

"Split logs, and cut a way through the thicket like fellows on an uninhabited island; or sometimes I think I'm fighting a bear. I'd like to fight a young bear!—wouldn't you?"

"I suspect not. Girls do not fight bears."

"Ah, I forgot!" said he, blushing deeply; and, ashamed of his blunder, he bent his head over a picture.

Meanwhile, Vyner and Grenfell were walking the deck and conversing in a low tone.

"It would be a mistake, Vyner, a great mistake, take my word for it," said the other. "To the man who assumes the incognito, all attempt at recognition is offensive. Besides, what is it to lead to? You can't imagine he'll want to talk over the past, and for such a man there is no speculation in the future.

"But the idea of being on the very island with him, knowing that he was within a mile of me, and that I never went to see him! It sounds very heartless, and I feel it would be so."

"I have nothing to say when you put the question on the ground of a sentiment. I can only discuss it as a matter of expediency, or the reverse. You don't charge a man with the opinions you find in an anonymous book, because, even supposing they are his, he has not thought proper to avow them; well, you owe exactly the same deference to him who lives under an incognito, or retires to some secluded, unfrequented spot. His object is to escape notice; under what plea do you drag him forth into the broad noonday?"

"I am certain my wife wouldn't forgive me if I left without even an effort to see him."

"As to that I can say nothing. I never was married, and I do not pretend to know what are the 'cases of conscience' discussed connubially."

"You see, Grenfell," said the other, confidentially, "we all feel, as we have a right to feel, that we have done this man a great wrong. There has not been one single calamity of his life, from the day we broke with him, that is not traceable to us. His unfortunate line in politics, his low, political associates, the depraved life some assert that he lives, and, worse than all, his wretched marriage with a poor uneducated peasant girl."

"And do you fancy that a morning call from you is the reparation for all this?"

"Come, come, that is not the fair way to put it. Luttrell and I were once great friends. I was, I well know, very much his inferior in knowledge and power, but in worldliness and tact I was more than his match, and he gave way to me on every question of this sort. It may be—I'd like to think it might prove the case—that this old sentiment has not died out of his heart, that, as he used to say long ago, and people laughed when he said it, 'Let us hear what Vyner says.' Now, if this were so, I might even yet do something, if not for him, for that fine boy there."

"Leave that fine boy alone, Vyner, that's my advice to you. I never saw a fellow of his years with such an overweening self-confidence. There is, I don't deny it, a certain 'gentleman' element in him, but it is dashed with something which I neither understand, nor could venture to say what it may lead to; but I repeat, leave him alone."

Vyner shook his head dissentingly, but did not speak.

"Besides, let us be practical. What could you do for him? You'd not adopt him, I take it?" Vyner was silent, and he continued: "Well, then, you'd cut off the one tie he has in life, and not substitute another. Besides, don't you remember what old Scott said at the Huxleigh steeple-chase: 'I never back the half bred 'uns, no matter how well they look in training.'"

"What a stickler for blood you have become," said Vyner, laughing; and it was only as he saw the crimson flush in the other's cheek that he bethought him how the remark might have offended.

"Take your own line then," said Grenfell, angrily; "it doesn't signify to me personally a brass farthing! Our dinner company with old Crab and the German Frau can scarcely but be improved, even though it be by the admixture of a little rebellion through it."

"For all that, you'd like Luttrell immensely if you met him."

"I like none but men of the world—men who know the people, the places and the things one is daily connected with—who can take up the game of society where it left off last night, and have not to read themselves up in daily life the way fellows read their history out of the *Annual Register*."

"Well, I'll write him a note," said Vyner, following out his own thoughts; "I'll tell him, in a few words, how I chanced to come here, and I'll ask if he will receive me, or, better still, if he'll come and dine with us to-morrow."

"I know the answer you'll get as well as if I had written it."

"Well, what will it be?"

"See you hanged first!"

"What is all this going on below? Are you quarrelling, children?" cried Vyner, as a great uproar burst forth from the cabin.

"Oh, no, papa; but Robinson is so droll; he put baby-doll into a boat and had her shipwrecked, and saved by the little negro; and now they are going to be married. Just come and see it all."

"Tell me, Harry," said Vyner, "what would papa say if I were to write him a note and say that I have detained you here to dinner, and wouldn't let you go?"

"He'd say I could have jumped overboard," said the boy reddening at what he thought was an imputation on his personal prowess.

"I don't exactly mean by force, my dear boy; I intended to say, by persuasion."

Either the view now submitted to him was not very clear, or that it was combined with other elements, but he made no reply.

"I will put it in this wise: I'll say I have made Harry's acquaintance this morning by a lucky accident, and I hope you will not be displeased if he should stay and dine with us. I have a little girl of his own age who is delighted to have his company, and I feel certain you will not deprive her of so agreeable a playfellow."

"Papa will not know," said the boy, moodily.

"Not know what, my little man?"

"Papa will not care," said he; and a slight tremor shook his voice.

"Not care for what?"

"I mean," said he, resolutely, "that I often go away at daybreak and never come back till late at night, and papa does not mind it—he never asks for me."

As he spoke, Ada drew nigh her father, and clasped his hand in her own, while her tearful eyes turned alternately from her father to the child, the sense of her own happy lot, loved and cherished as she was, blending with a deep pity for one so desolate and friendless.

"That's the way boys are made independent and bold-hearted," said Vyner, hastily. "Men like their sons to be trained up in the free habits they enjoyed themselves. So, then, my note is not necessary—you can remain without it?"

"Would you like it?" said he, turning to Ada.

"Oh, how much!" cried she, eagerly.

"Then I'll stay!" As he spoke, he leant back in his chair, and, who knows with what thoughts, sighed faintly, while two heavy tears rolled slowly down his cheeks. Vyner saw it, but turned away and went on deck.

"I can gather from what that boy has just said," said he to Grenfell, "that his father is almost indifferent about him; he never knows of his coming or going, nor ever looks for him at meal-times."

"I should be surprised if it were otherwise," said Grenfell. "Demoralization never works by halves. When a man begins to go down hill, he never takes any other road. What could remain of your great scholar and double-first man after years of association with brutal companionship and a peasant for a wife! How could it be possible for him to retain any one of the habits of his own class amidst the daily frictions of that vulgar existence!"

"I begin to fear as much myself," said Vyner, sorrowfully. As he spoke, he felt Ada's hand in his own; she drew him to one side, and whispered, "Harry is crying, papa. He says he must go home, but he won't tell me why."

"Perhaps I can guess, darling. Let me speak with him alone." Vyner went down into the cabin by himself, but whatever passed between him and the boy, the result, so far as persuading him to stay, was not successful, and young Luttrell came on deck along with him.

"Man a boat, there," said Vyner, "and take this young gentleman ashore. I will write one line to your father, Harry."

The two children stood hand in hand while Vyner wrote. They wore each of them a look of sorrow at parting; but the boy's face had a flush of shame as well as sorrow. They never uttered a word, however.

Vyner's note was in these words:

"MY DEAR LUTTRELL,—Will you allow an old friend to see you, when he calls himself,

"Affectionately yours,
"GERVAIS VYNER?"

He did not show this note to Grenfell, but handed it to the boy at once.

"He won't take the books, papa," whispered Ada, "nor anything else I offered him."

"He'll know us all better later on, dearest. Do not embarrass him now by attention; he is ashamed to refuse, and does not care to accept. If papa will let you come out to breakfast with us to-morrow, Harry, we shall be glad to see you; and remember, I look to you to show me where we are to catch the lobsters."

"I'll tell you that now," said the boy. "You see that great rock yonder. Well, a little more inland, where the water is about four fathoms, and perfectly clear, that's the spot."

When the boat was announced as ready, the boy took his leave of each in turn, shaking hands with Vyner, and Ada, and the governess; and then, advancing towards Grenfell, he stopped, and simply said good-bye.

"Good day, sir," said Grenfell stiffly, for he was one of those men whose egotism even a child could wound. "Is that boy like his father?" asked he, as Harry passed over the side.

"Wonderfully like, since his face took that expression of seriousness."

"Then it is not a good face."

"Not a good face?"

"Mind, I didn't say not a handsome face, for it is strikingly regular and well proportioned, but the expression is furtive and secret."

"Nothing of the kind. Luttrell was as frank a fellow as ever breathed. I think, after what I told you, you can see that it was trustfulness proved his ruin."

"Isn't he what your countrymen would call a 'Wunderkind,' Mademoiselle?" asked Grenfell of the governess.

"No, Saar, he is a much-to-be-pitied, and not the less-for-that-very dignified youth."

"How Homeric it makes language to think in German. There he is, Ada, waving a rag of some sort, in farewell to you."

Ada kissed her hand several times to him, and then hastened below into the cabin.

"I have asked Luttrell's leave to call on him," said Vyner.

"I thought you would," was the dry reply.

"I only wrote one line, and made my request in the name of our old friendship."

"Well, of course, you are the best judge of your own duties; only, for my own part, I beg, if I ever should turn hermit, that you'll not think yourself bound to have me shaved and trimmed for the honour of dining some one day at your table."

"Upon my word, I think it would be a pity to take you out of your cave, or whatever you call it," said the governess, with a spiteful laugh.

"There, don't fight any more till tea-time," said Vyner, laughingly. "Who'll come on shore with me? I'm for a ramble over that purple mountain yonder."

"I have the music-lesson."

"And I have the remainder of that article in the *Quarterly*," said Grenfell, "which proves incontestably the utter hopelessness of Ireland. The writer knows the people well, and describes their faults of character perfectly."

A low faint sob caught Vyner's ear, and, on hurrying below, he found Ada seated at the table, with her head leaning on her arms.

"What's the matter, Ada darling?" asked he, gently.

"Oh, papa, is was for his mother he was crying, for though she seldom spoke to him or noticed him, he used to see her at the window, and now he'll never see her more."

"We must try and comfort him, Ada; the poor boy has a very dreary lot in life."

"He says he is happy, papa! and that he only hopes he'll never have to leave this lonely island all his life."

"Did he speak of his father at all?"

"No, papa; only to say that he'd never remember whether he was at home or abroad, and that it was so pleasant not to have any one who cared what became of one."

"And you—did you agree with him?"

"Oh no, no!" cried she, as her eyes swam in tears. "I could have told him how much better it was to be loved."

Vyner turned away to hide his own emotion, and then, with an affected carelessness, said, "Get over this music-lesson now, and whenever you are free, tell Mr. Crab to hoist a bit of white bunting to the peak, and I'll come back to fetch you for a walk with me."

"Is Mr. Grenfell going, papa?"

"No, darling; but why do you ask?"

"Because—because—I'd rather go with you alone. It is always so much nicer and happier."

"How is it that Grenfell, with all his smartness, can never hit it off with any one, young or old, rich or poor?" thought Vyner, as he walked the deck, deep in thought. "He reads everything, has a smattering of all subjects, with a good memory and a glib tongue, and yet I believe I am the only man about town who could tolerate him." If this were a reflection that had more than once occurred to his mind, it usually ended by impressing the conviction that he, Vyner, must have rare qualities of head and heart, not merely to endure, but actually to almost like, a companionship for which none other would have had taste or temper but himself. Now, however—not easy is it to say why—a doubt flashed across him that his doubting, distrustful, scoffing nature might prove in the end an evil, just as a certain malaria, not strong enough to give fever, will ultimately impregnate the blood and undermine the constitution.

"I don't think he has done me any mischief as yet," said he to himself, with a smile; "but shall I always be able to say as much?"

"You must read this paper—positively you must," cried Grenfell from the sofa, where he lay under a luxurious awning. "This fellow writes well; he shows that the Irish never had any civilization, nor, except where it crept in through English influence, has there ever been a vestige of such in the island."

"I don't see I shall be anything the better for believing him!"

"It may save you from that blessed purchase of an Irish property that brought you down to all this savagery. It may rescue you from the regret of having a gentleman shot because he was intrepid enough to collect your rents. That surely is something."

"But I have determined on the purchase of Derryvaragh," said Vyner, "if it only be what descriptions make it."

"To live here, I hope—to turn Carib—cross yourself when you meet a priest, and wear a landlord's scalp at your waist-belt."

"Nay, nay! I hope for better things, and that the English influences you spoke of so feelingly will not entirely desert me in my banishment."

"Don't imagine that any one will come over here to see you, Vyner, if you mean that."

"Not even the trusty Grenfell?" said he, with a half-smile.

"Not if you were to give me the fee-simple of the barbarous tract you covet."

"I'll not believe it, George. I'll back your friendship against all the bogs that ever engulphed an oak forest. But what is that yonder? Is it a boat? It seems only a few feet long."

"It is one of those naval constructions of your charming islanders; and coming this way, too."

"The fellow has got a letter, sir; he has stuck it in his hatband," said Mr. Crab.

"An answer from Luttrell," muttered Vyner. "I wonder will he receive me?"

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE SPOIL WAS DIVIDED.

THE letter, which was handed on board by a very wild looking native, was written on coarse paper, and sealed with the commonest wax. It was brief, and ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—I cannot imagine that such a meeting as you propose would be agreeable to either of us; certainly the impression my memory retains of you, forbids me to believe that you would like to see me as I am, and where I am. If your desire be, however, prompted by any kind thought of serving me, let me frankly tell you, that I am as much beyond the reach of such kindness as any man can be who lives and breathes in this weary world. Leave me, therefore, to myself, and forget me.

"I am grateful for your attentions to my boy, but you will understand why I cannot permit him to revisit you. I am, faithfully yours,

"JOHN H. LUTTRELL."

"Well, did I guess aright?" cried Grenfell, as Vyner stood reading the letter over for the third time; "is his answer what I predicted?"

"Very nearly so," said the other, as he handed him the letter to read.

"It is even stronger than I looked for; and he begins 'Dear sir.'"

"Yes, and I addressed him 'My dear Luttrell!'"

"Well; all the good sense of the correspondence is on his side; he sees naturally enough the worse than uselessness of a meeting. How could it be other than painful?"

"Still I am very sorry that he should refuse me."

"Of course you are; it is just the way a fellow in all the vigour of health walks down the ward of an hospital, and, as he glances at the hollow cheeks and sunken eyes on either side, fancies how philanthropic and good he is to come there and look at them. You wanted to go and stare at this poor devil out of that sentimental egotism. I'm certain you never suspected it, but there is the secret of your motive, stripped of its fine illusions."

"How ill you think of every one, and with what pleasure you think it?"

"Not a bit. I never suffer myself to be cheated; but it does not amuse me in the least to unmask the knavery."

"Now, having read me so truthfully, will you interpret Luttrell a little?"

"His note does not want a comment. The man has no wish to have his poverty and degraded condition spied out. He feels something too low for friendship, and too high for pity; and he shrinks, and very naturally shrinks, from a scene in which every look he gave, every word he uttered, every sigh that he could but half smother, would be recalled to amuse your wife, and your sister-in-law, when you reached home again.',

"He never imputed anything of the kind to me," said Vyner' angrily.

"And why not? Are we in our gossiping moments intent upon anything but being agreeable, not very mindful of private confidences or indiscreet avowals? We are only bent upon being good recounters, sensation novelists, always flattering ourselves the while as to the purity of our motives and the generosity of our judgments, when we throw into the narrative such words as the 'poor fellow,' the 'dear creature.' We forget the while that the description of the prisoner never affects the body of the indictment."

"I declare you are downright intolerable, Grenfell, and if the world were only half as bad as you'd make it, I'd say Luttrell was the wisest fellow going to have taken his leave of it."

"I'd rather sit the comedy out than go home and fret over its vapidness."

"Well, Mr. Crab," said Vyner, turning suddenly to where his captain was waiting to speak with him, "what news of our spar?"

"Nothing very good, sir. There's not a bit of timber on the island would serve our purpose."

"I suppose we must shift as well as we can till we make the mainland!"

"This fellow here in the boat, sir," said a sailor, touching his cap as he came aft, "says that his master has three or four larch-trees about the length we want."

"No, no, Crab," whispered Vyner; "I don't think we can do anything in that quarter."

"Would he sell us one of them, my man?" cried Crab, to the peasant.

"He'd give it to you," said the man, half doggedly.

"Yes, but we'd rather make a deal for it. Look here, my good fellow; do you go back and fetch us the longest and stoutest of those poles, and here's a guinea for your own trouble. Do you understand me?"

The man eyed the coin curiously, but made no motion to touch it. It was a metal he had never seen before, nor had he the faintest clue to its value.

"Would you rather have these, then?" said Crab, taking a handful of silver from his pocket and offering it to him.

The man drew the back of his hand across his eyes, as if the sight had dazzled him, and muttered something in Irish.

"Come, say you'll do it," said Crab, encouragingly.

"Is there any answer for my master, to his letter, I mean?" said the man, looking at Vyner.

"No, I think not; wait a moment. No, none," said Vyner, after a moment of struggle; and the words were not well uttered, when the fellow pushed off his boat, and struck out with all his vigour for the shore.

"What a suspicious creature your savage is; that man evidently believed you meant to bribe him to some deep treachery against his master," said Grenfell.

"Do let the poor peasant escape," cried Vyner, laughingly, while he hastened below to avoid any further display of the other's malevolence, calling out to Mr. Crab to follow him. "Let us get under weigh with the land breeze this evening," said he.

"There's a strong current sets in here, sir. I'd as soon have daylight for it, if it's the same to you."

"Be it so. To-morrow morning, then, Crab;" and so saying, he took up a book, and tried to interest himself with it.

The peasant meanwhile gained the land, and made the best of his way homeward.

"Tell the master there's no answer, Molly," said he, as she stood wiping the perspiration from her face with her apron at the door of a long low-roofed building, into which all the assembled guests were congregated.

"Indeed, and I won't, Tim Hennesy," said she, tartly. "'Tis enough is on my bones to-day, not to be thinking of letters and writings. Go in and help Dan Neven with that long trunk there, and then bring a hatchet and a hammer."

The man obeyed without a word; and, having assisted to deposit a heavy deal box like a sea-chest in the place assigned it, perceived that several others of various sizes and shapes lay around; all of which formed objects of intense curiosity to the visitors, if one were to judge from the close scrutiny they underwent, as well as the frequent tapping by knuckles and sticks, to assist the explorer to a guess at what was contained within.

A word or two will explain the scene. When Molly Ryan came to inform her master that the relatives of his late wife intended to sail by the evening's tide, and wished to pay their respects to him personally, before departure, he excused himself on some pretext of illness; but to cover his want of courtesy, he directed her to tell them that they were free to take, each of them, some memorial of her that was gone, and ordered Molly to have all the boxes that contained her effects, conveyed into the long storehouse.

"Let them take what they like, Molly," said he, abruptly, as though not wishing to discuss the matter at more length.

"And as much as they like?" asked she.

"Yes, as much as they like," said he, motioning that he would be left in peace and undisturbed.

Loud and full were the utterances of praise that this munificence evoked. "Wasn't he the real gentleman?" "Wasn't it the heart's blood of a good stock?" "Wasn't it like one of the 'ould race,' that could think of an act at once so graceful and liberal?" "After all, it wasn't proud he was. It was just a way he had; and 'poor Shusy, that was gone,' was the lucky woman to have been his wife." "To be sure, it was a solitary kind of life she led, and without friends or companions; but she had the best of everything." Such were the first commentaries. Later on, gratitude cooled down to a quiet rationalism, and they agreed that he was only giving away what was of no use to him. "He'll surely not marry again, and what could he do with cloaks, and shawls, and gowns, that would only be motheaten if he kept them."

"These two here is linen," said Molly with an air of decision, "and I suppose you don't want to see them."

A murmur of disapproval ran through the meeting. They wanted to see everything. His Honour's munificence was not limited. It included all that was once hers; and a very animated discussion ensued as to what constituted personal properties.

"Maybe you'd like the crockery too," said Molly, indignantly, for she began to feel ashamed of the covetousness.

"We'll see everything," said old Peter Hogan, "and we'll begin with this." So saying, he inserted a chisel beneath one of the pine planks, and soon displayed to the company a large chest full of house linen. The articles were neither costly or remarkable, but they seemed both to the beholders; and sheets, and napkins, and pillow-cases, and table-cloths were all scrutinized closely, and unanimously declared to be perfection.

The crockery and glass were next examined, and even more enthusiastically approved of. Some curious china and some specimens of old Venetian glass, family relics, that even connoisseurship might have valued, really amazed them, and many an epithet in Irish went round as a cup or a goblet was passed from hand to hand to be admired.

The clothes were the last to be examined, and with all their heightened expectations the reality surpassed what they looked for. Hats, and shawls, and silk gowns, scarfs, and bonnets, and ribbons, soon covered every box and bench around, and covetous eyes sparkled as each longed for some special prize in this vast lottery. "I remember the day she wore that brown silk at chapel," said one. "That's the blue tabinet she had on at the christening." "There's the elegant shawl she had on at the fair at Ennis." "But look at this—isn't this a real beauty" cried one, who drew forth a bright dress of yellow satin, which seemed never to have been worn.

"Don't you think you could pick and choose something to plaze ye, now?" said Molly, who was in reality not a little frightened by all this enthusiasm.

"It is true for you, Molly Ryan," said Peter. "There's something for everybody, and since the company trusts it to me to make the division, this is what I do. The crockery and glass for Mr. Rafter, the linen for myself, and the clothes to be divided among the women when we get home."

"So that you'll take everything," cried Molly.

"With the blessin' of Providence 'tis what I mean," said he; and a full chorus of approving voices closed the speech.

"The master said you were to choose what plazed you——"

"And it's what we're doing. We are plazed with everything, 'and why wouldn't we? Wasn't she that's gone our own blood, and didn't she own them? The pillow she lay on and the cup she dhrunk out of is more to us than their weight in goold."

Another and fuller murmur approved these sentiments.

"And who is to have this?" cried one of the women, as she drew forth from a small pasteboard box an amber necklace and cross, the one solitary trinket that belonged to her that was gone. If not in itself an object of much value, it was priceless to the eyes that now gazed on it, and each would gladly have relinquished her share to possess it.

"Maybe you'd have the dacency to leave that for his Honour," said Molly, reprovingly.

Less, perhaps, in accordance with the sentiment than in jealous dread lest another should obtain it, each seemed to concur with this recommendation.

"There's something in what Molly says," said old Peter, with the air of a judge delivering a charge. "If his Honour houlds to a thing of the kind, it would be hard to refuse to him; but if he doesn't, or if it would only be more grief to be reminding him of what's gone——Let me finish what I have to say, Molly," added he, with some irritation, as a sneering laugh from her interrupted his speech.

"There's an old pair of shoes of hers in the room within. I'll go for them, and then you'll have everything," said she; and she darted an angry glance around and left the spot.

"I'll wear this—this is for me!" cried a little girl taking the amber necklace from the case and putting it on. And a buzz of astonishment at the audacity ran around. She was about eleven years of age, but her dark blue eyes and long lashes made her seem older. It was one of those beautiful faces which appear to suggest that with years the delicate loveliness must be lost, so perfect the accordance between the expression and the feature. She had a mass of golden-brown-hair, which fell in long curls over a neck of perfect whiteness; but even these traits were less striking than the air of gracefulness that really implied a condition far above that of her rank in life; and, as she stood in the midst to be admired, there was a haughty consciousness of her claim for admiration that was as triumphant in that assembly as ever was the proud assertion of beauty in a court.

"It becomes you well, Kitty O'Hara, and you shall have it, too," cried old Hogan, who was her grandfather, and whose pride in her took the shape of the boldest aspirations for her future. "Ain't I right?" cried he, appealing to those around him. "Look at her, and say if she isn't a picture!"

With a full burst of assent all broke in at this appeal, and still she stood there unabashed, almost unmoved, indeed, by the admiring looks and enthusiastic words around her.

"Isn't that the making of a lady, ay, and as elegant a lady as ever stepped?" cried the old man, as his eyes ran over with proud emotion. "And as sure as my name is Peter Hogan, it's diamonds will be round the same neck yet! Yes, my darling, yer ould grandfather won't be to the fore to see it, but there's some here that will. Mark the words I'm saying now; lay them up in your hearts, and see if I'm not telling the truth. There she stands before you that'll raise her family, and make a name for them far and wide."

While he delivered this boastful speech, the girl turned her eyes from him, a slight flush deepened the colour of her cheek, and a scarcely perceptible eagerness showed itself on the parted lips, but her attitude was unchanged, and a slight nod of the head, in token of assent, was the only notice she took of his words.

"Yes, come in, my dear," cried Hogan at this moment—"come in, Master Harry; there's none here but your own kith and kin, and here's a nice little wife, or a sweetheart, for you." As he said this, he drew from the doorway, where he lingered, the boy, who now came forward with a shamefaced and reluctant look. "There they stand," said the old man, as he placed them side by side, "and I defy the world to show me a purtier couple."

The boy turned a long and steady look at the girl—something for the beauty, and something, too, doubtless, there was for the ornaments that heightened it—and she bore the scrutiny without a shadow of constraint; but there was even more, for, as he continued to stare at her, she smiled superciliously, and said at last, with a faint smile, "I hope I'm not so ugly that I frighten you!"

There was just that pertness in the speech that stood for wit with the company, and they laughed loud and heartily at what they fancied to be a repartee.

"Did ye ever see a purtier—did ye ever see as purty?" cried old Hogan.

"Yes I did, this very evening, on board of that schooner there. There's one ten times as handsome, and she is a lady too."

Insolent as were the words, the look and manner with which he gave them were far more so. It was like the speech of a proud noble to his vassals, who actually derived a sense of pleasure in the measure of outrage he could dare to mete out to them. The boy turned his haughty stare around at each in turn, as though to say, "Who is there to gainsay me?" and then left the place.

"Isn't that a worthy twig of the ould tree?" cried old Hogan, passionately. "The world hasn't done with the Luttrells yet! But I know well who puts these thoughts in the child's head. It's Molly Ryan, and no other. Taching him, as she calls it, to remember he's a gentleman."

The company endorsed all the indignation of the speaker, but, soon recalled to more practical thoughts, proceeded to nail down the trunks and boxes, and prepared to carry them down to the seaboard.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE SEA-SHORE AT NIGHT.

TOWARDS the evening of the same day a light breeze from the westward sprang up, and Mr. Crab argued that there was little use in waiting any longer to refit, and proposed to sail with the tide. By keeping along close to shore he learned that the ebb would take him well out to sea before midnight. Vyner, therefore, gave orders that the yacht should lie-to after she rounded the extreme promontory of the island, and send in a boat there to take him off, thus giving him one last ramble over a spot it was scarcely possible he would ever revisit.

He landed early in the evening, and amused himself strolling at will along the desolate shore. There were objects enough on every hand to excite interest, whether the visitor had been man of science or man of taste. Strange sea-plants and shells abounded; lichens of colours the most novel and varied; rocks, whose layers defied all theories of stratification, and were convoluted and enclosed one within another inextricably. Caves, whose stalactites glittered with the gorgeous tints of Bohemian glass. The very cries of the sea-fowl had a wild unearthly shriek in them that seemed to suit the solitude, and their fearlessness showed how little they knew of molestation.

"How peaceful at first, how dreary at last, must be life in such a spot!" thought Vyner; who, like all men, would pronounce upon the problem as it addressed itself to *him*. He could understand the repose of coming suddenly there out of the din and turmoil of the world, and he could picture to his mind how the soft teaching of that first sentiment would darken into the impenetrable blackness of unbroken gloom. As he thus mused, he was sorry that he had written that note to Luttrell. He had no right to obtrude himself upon one, who, in withdrawing from the world, declared that he desired to be unknown. He was half angry with himself for a step which now appeared so unjustifiable. "After all," thought he, "the man who makes this his home should not fear to have his door forced; he ought to be able to sleep with his latch ajar, and never dread an intruder." Again and again he wished that he had gone his way without even letting Luttrell know that he had been his neighbour.

As he mused he rambled onward, now, from some rocky point obtaining a view of the jagged coast line, broken into innumerable bays, some small enough to be mere fissures, now turning his glance inward, where a succession of valleys, brown and purple in the evening light, darkened and deepened beneath him. He could, besides, in the far distance, make out the copse of trees that sheltered the abbey, and at last detect the twinkle of a light through the foliage, and then turning seaward, he could descry the light and airy spars of his little vessel as she slowly crept along, a light from a stern window showing where he, too, for the nonce, owned a home, on the blue waters of the Atlantic. What a difference between these two homes! what blissful thoughts, and budding hopes, and present enjoyments in the one, what unbroken gloom in the other! "I was wrong to have written, but I wish he had not repulsed me," said he, and still there lingered in his heart a half hope, that, if he were to present himself boldly before Luttrell, he would not reject him. The dread of Grenfell was too great to make him risk defeat; that scoffing, sneering spirit, who on the mere fact of thinking ill of every one, took credit for detecting all individual short-coming, would be so unforgiving if he had to come and own that he had been twice repulsed!

"No," thought he, "I'll accept my defeat as it is, and try to think no more of it;" and then he endeavoured to think of the scene and the objects around him. From the spur of the mountain, a long, low, shingly promontory stretched into the sea, at the extremity of which were some rocks, forming an arm of a large bay that swept boldly inwards, and this was the spot which on the map he had pointed out as a suitable place for the yacht to lie-to, and wait for him. He now saw, however, that in following out the spit of land, he had diverged largely from the way, and must retrace his steps for above a mile ere he could reach the strand, and at the same time, in the half fading twilight, he could make out the schooner, under easy sail, heading still farther to the southward.

Crab had evidently mistaken the headland, and was making for one still more distant. What was to be done? In coming down to the coast line he had subjected himself to following out all the jagged and irregular course of the shore, and yet to venture inland without a guide would have been the extreme of rashness. There was nothing for it but to make a signal, if perchance it could be seen; the *Meteor* was not more than a mile off, and the project seemed not hopeless. He tied his handkerchief to his cane, and hastened on towards one of the rocks before him; as he drew nigher, he saw something which at last he made out to be the figure of a man, seated with his head supported between his hands, and gazing steadfastly seaward. Vyner mounted the rock and waved his signal several times, but in vain; the dark background of the mountain probably obscured the flag, and prevented its being observed.

"I want to signal the schooner yonder, my good man," cried he to a poor-looking creature who sat crouched down close to the water's edge; "could you get me some dry leaves or chips together to make a fire?" The other looked up with a startled air, for he had thought himself alone, and then rising to his feet, they stood face to face. "My dear old friend!" cried Vyner, "have we met at last? How glad I am to see you again."

"Not this way, surely not this way," muttered Luttrell, in a faint and broken voice.

"To be sure I am, Luttrell. I'll call the chance that led me here one of the happiest of my life, if it brings you back to any of your old feeling for me."

"You got my note?" asked the other in a hoarse voice.

"Yes; and it was no part of my intention to molest you, Luttrell. This meeting is, I assure you, the merest accident."

"Let me go, then, Vyner; the shame is killing me; I wouldn't that you had seen me thus—in these rags, in all this misery. These are not the memories I wanted you to carry away with you; but what would you have? I came here to live like the others."

"My dear old friend, I wanted to talk of long ago with you; it is not to reproach you I've come. Take my word for it, I feel too acutely all the wrong you have suffered from mine. I know too well at whose door your heaviest injuries lie."

"If I had attempted to be more or better than my neighbours, I couldn't have lived here," cried he, eagerly reverting to his self-defence.

"But why live here, Luttrell? It is not at your age, or with your abilities, a man retires from the game of life."

"I have played all my cards, Gervais," said he, with a wild laugh, "and never scored a point with them."

"How many a fellow has had a long run of ill-luck, to be repaid by as great a share of fortune after."

"Ay, but I'll not try it! I don't ask, I don't wish it. If I were to win now, I have nothing to do with my winnings."

"Think of your boy—your fine boy, Luttrell!"

"Ah, Robinson!" cried he, laughing; and Vyner blushed deeply as he fancied how the child had repeated the nickname. "There is only one way he could want such assistance, and if he but live here, he'll never need it."

"Live here! but you cannot mean that he should?"

"Why not? What need is there that he should know of all those fine prizes that his father strove for and never won, any more than of fine food, or fine clothes, or fine equipages?"

Vyner shook his head in dissent, and the other went on with increased energy.

"My own mistake was, to have borne the thing so long; I might have come here before my health was broken, my hand unsteady, my foot weak, and my nerves shattered. I'd have gone out to see you, Vyner," said he, suddenly; "but Harry told me you were not alone; you had a friend. Who is he?"

"Grenfell; you remember a Grenfell at Christ Church?"

"Only Cox and Grenfell's son, the potted-shrimp man; of course it's not he?"

"Yes it is, and a very clever fellow too."

"There's what I couldn't do, Vyner; there you beat me," cried he, aloud; "with the peasant, with the mountaineer, with the fisherman, yes, I can live in daily, hourly companionship. I can eat as coarse food, wear as coarse clothes, lie down on as mean a bed, talk as penuriously, and think as humbly, but I couldn't endure the continual refinement of your fellow of new-made wealth, nor the pretensions of one who feels that by money he is to be any one's equal."

"How your old pride of family stirs you still, Luttrell."

"Not so; it is not for myself I am pleading. I am not come of a stock so distinguished that I can arrogate to myself the defence of my order. The first of my name who came over here was a Dutch pedlar; some generations of thrift and industry made us gentlemen. For time does for family what it does for wine, and just merely by age your poor light Medoc mellows into very drinkable claret. But how have you made me rattle on in my old guise! See, they are signalling to you, yonder; that lantern at the peak has been run up now."

"I must manage to let them know I'm here; how to make a fire is the question."

"There's abundance of broken wood along here. The fishermen's boats fare ill along this coast; we'll soon gather enough for your purpose."

As they strayed about collecting the fragments of broken timber, Vyner pondered over the absence of all move on Luttrell's part to invite him to his home. Indeed, in his alacrity to make the signal, he only showed his eagerness to aid his departure. He wondered, too, how much external change, and how little real alteration, had taken place in Luttrell. His old conversational turn was there, though he seemed half ashamed when he found he had fallen into it.

"I told you we should not be long making a respectable pile," said Luttrell. "The wreck furnishing the bonfire is the law of nature. If my eyes do not deceive me, they have lowered a boat:" as he spoke, he knelt down to kindle the wood, by using his hat to fan the flame, which, after smouldering for a moment, sprang up into a clear tongue of fire. "There, Vyner, they see it; they have thrice lowered the light from the peak."

"The boat can come in here safely?"

"There's water for a large ship in this bay. Great facilities exist in these Islands of Arran, and if trade were ever to turn its steps hither, I'd direct my attention to wrecking to-morrow. The man who has so successfully achieved his own ruin, ought to be able to assist others."

A shout from the beach was now replied to by Vyner, and the stout rowers pulled in vigorously to the shore.

"I have not shocked you, Vyner," said Luttrell, "by asking you to see what would have shocked you—the place I live in. If you were one of those men to whom mere curiosity affords some pleasure, I'd have shelved my pride, or my shame, or whatever be the name of it, and said, 'Come and look at my den; see to what poor conclusions a life of blunders leads;' but you are made of other stuff, and would find no happiness in my humiliation."

"Will you not come on board with me, Luttrell, and let us have one long summer's night gossip together?"

"I'd scarce refuse if you had been alone; I can't face your distinguished friend."

"You are unjust, quite unjust to him; besides, knowing our old ties, he'll leave us to ourselves, and we shall have our talk unmolested. Is there not in the past something to build on for the future——Well, for Harry?"

"I think not. It is not necessary to plot out the life of one bred and trained as he is. Let the world treat him as it may, he'll scarcely meet any hardships he has not had a foretaste of."

"But what do you intend by him?"

"If he likes idleness, the elegant leisure of my own life, for instance," said he, with a mocking laugh, "he'll have about the amount of fortune such a mode of living requires. If he be ambitious, or prefer a course of activity, he can go on board some of these American traders, or sail with a fishing lugger. Frankly, Vyner, it's a matter I have not given much thought to. There is but one part of it, indeed, on which I can declare I have made up my mind. He is to have no protectors, no patrons. We are a hard race to deal with, and we often seem ungrateful when we are merely self-willed."

"How I wish you'd let me talk all these things over with you," said Vyner, in a friendly tone, "not to say that I want your advice on my own account."

"Advice, and from me!"

"Even so, Luttrell. I have a project about purchasing some property on the coast here. Not a very profitable investment, perhaps, but certainly cheap, and at some long future to become possibly remunerative."

"Derryvaragh, I suppose?"

"Yes, that's the name."

"The most picturesque spot in the island; finer than the boasted Killarney itself, and far and away beyond Windermere and the Scotch Lakes. I know it well. I have walked the mountains grouse-shooting, and fished every mile of the river; but what would you do with it when you called it yours? You dare not assert one single right of property; the people who live there, and whose fathers have lived there for centuries, have never acknowledged lord or master. You'll stock it with sheep, and send an agent. They'll eat your mutton, and shoot your agent. You'll appeal to the law, and you might as well threaten a New Zealander with a bill in Chancery. Leave such speculations alone; there are no fortunes to be made here, not even fame for having reformed us. All the privilege your purchase will confer, will be to feed us in times of famine, and be shot at when prices rise and the nights grow longer."

"Why, you are more discouraging than Grenfell!"

"I don't know about Grenfell, but I know that Ireland is not to be bettered by men like you. It is out of our own rough energies must come the cure for our own coarse maladies. Go back and build model cottages in Norfolk, give prizes to your oldest farm labourer, or the mother of the largest family. Here's your yawl; good-bye."

"Do step in and come on board with me, Luttrell, if only for an hour or two."

"No, I cannot. I'd not stand your friend's impertinences about Ireland, besides, and I'd be led into rudeness, which I'd not forgive myself. Lady Vyner is not with you?"

"No, she's in Wales, at Llantlannoch, where I wish you'd let me tell her you were coming to see her."

"Who knows!"

"My dear Luttrell, is this a promise?"

"No, not exactly."

"Will you write to me."

"I think not."

"May I write to you?"

"I'd rather you would not. You cannot suspect, Vyner, how painful even these few minutes we have passed together will render the life I go back to; do not add to that bitterness by what would become a ceaseless sorrow."

"But Harry. Let Harry come to us; there is an excellent school at Wrexham."

"There's a school on that promontory yonder, where the master, besides reading and writing, instructs in net-mending, sail making, caulking, and fish salting. Your Wrexham fellow couldn't compete with that. Good-bye."

With a hurried shake of the hand, and as though nervously irritable at being stared at by the sailors, Luttrell moved away, and Vyner gazed after him for a moment, and stepped into the boat.

"Mr. Crab says, sir, that the weather looks dirty outside," said the coxswain; but Vyner did not heed the remark, and sat deeply buried in his own thoughts.

CHAPTER VII.

A COTTAGE IN WALES.

If we wanted a contrast to the wild desolation of Arran, it would be in the lovely valley of North Wales, where Vyner's cottage stood. It was a purchase he had made purely from its picturesque beauty; a spot chanced upon in a summer's ramble, and bought at once with that zest which leads a rich man to secure the gem that has captivated his fancy. It stood on a little rocky platform that projected from a mountain, and looked downwards and upwards, through one of those charming valleys which now widen into luxuriance, and now contract again till they resume the features of a deep ravine. A river of some size foamed and tumbled over a rocky bed beneath, and occasionally deepened into some waveless pool, over which the red-berried ash-trees drooped gracefully, and the dark copper beeches threw their bronzed shadows. Deep woods clothed the mountain in front, and over them all rose the rugged summit of Cader Idris, with its amphitheatre of rock half lost in the clouds.

If as regards loveliness of position, tranquillity, and beauty in all its details, the cottage of Dinasllyn could scarcely be surpassed, there was one detracting element which certainly impaired its charm, the "Quid amarum," amid all its excellence. It was a show place. It had been the scene of some romantic attachment, some half-remembered Abelard and Heloïse, whose pictures yet survived, and of whom there were traditions of rustic benches where they used to sit; of trees whereon their initials were carved; of cedars that they had planted. Vyner and his wife did not at first know, nor estimate, to what a heritage they had succeeded, nor in the least suspect what an infliction mere purposeless curiosity, united to plenty of leisure, may become.

The old gardener whom they had taken on with the cottage was not at all disposed to surrender that perquisite of black mail he had for years long levied from visitors, nor perhaps did he fancy to abdicate those functions of "Cicerone" which elevated him in the eyes of his fellows. If his love-story was not as affecting as Paul and Virginia, it had its realisms that compensated for some pathos. He could show the dairy where Chloe made the butter, and the kitchen-garden where Daphnis hoed his cabbages. There were the steps cut in the solid rock that led down to her bath in the river; "here the bower she loved so well; here the tree she planted."

To be obliged to devote a day of every week, or even certain hours of a day, to the invasion of a set of strangers, induced by *ennui*, by curiosity, or, as it may be, by mere imitation, to wander about your house and stroll through your garden, free to lounge in your easy-chair, or dispose themselves on your sofas, criticizing your pictures, your prints, your books, and your music, hazarding speculations as to your tastes and dispositions from the titles of the volumes on your table, and the names of your newspapers—to feel that, as the clock strikes a certain hour on a certain morning, all the cherished privacy which constitutes what we call home is fled, and that your hall is a public street, and your drawing-room a piazza, so that you are driven to hide yourself in your own house, at the peril of being classified among the curiosities, and perhaps sent off to press with the other details, satisfactory or the reverse, of the visitor's experience. These are no slight evils. They are a heavy tax on all the benefits of possession, and we have our doubts if even Naboth's vineyard would be enviable, if linked with the condition of showing the grounds and displaying the grapes to vulgar visitors.

When the Vyners purchased the cottage they had been told of the custom, just as you are told of a certain pathway across the lawn, which was a mere usurpation, a thing "without a shadow of legality," that you have only to close to-morrow, but of whose actual torments when you do come to suppress, no one has ever given the measure. They heard that the former owner usually set an hour or two apart on a Wednesday or a Thursday to gratify tourist curiosity; in fact, the celebrity of the spot had been ingeniously introduced as an element of value —just as the shade of Pope might be catalogued amongst the merits of Twickenham, and the memory of Rousseau figure in the inventory of a certain cottage near Geneva!

Vyner was himself one of those easy, happy natures, which submit without sacrifice to what affords pleasure to others. His wife saw no hardship in yielding to a moderate amount of this infliction; the more, since they only came to the cottage for about six or eight weeks of every year. It was Georgina Courtenay who resisted the custom as a most "unwarrantable intrusion, a practical impertinence," as she called it, which "reduced a family either to the condition of the cracked china on the mantelpiece, or the fussy house-keeper who exhibited it." Georgina was not a very tolerant nature; with what she disagreed, she made no compromise, and, like most such people, she found that life gave her sufficient occasion for conflict.

Vyner's absence from home presented an admirable opportunity "to suppress this nuisance," as she phrased it, and she accordingly had a notice appended to the gate—a copy of which was also duly forwarded to the village inn—stating that, during the sojourn of the family at Dinasllyn, the cottage and grounds were not open for the inspection of strangers. The morning of the famous ordinance was not more anxious to the household of Charles the Tenth, than was that of the edict to the family at the cottage. What was to follow that great *coup d'état* was the question. Would each of the vested interests—gardener, gatekeeper, housekeeper, and butler—submit to see their long-established perquisites suddenly effaced and extinguished? Would the village folk be content to lose the profits of strangers, who each year flocked down in increasing hordes? Would the tourists themselves, who had carried their romantic sympathies hundreds of miles by land or sea, agree to put up with a glance at the cottage chimneys by telescope, or a peep through the iron gate at the trim avenue, whose abrupt turning shut out all further inspection? If no splashed and booted aides-de-camp rode in to tell with trembling accents that popular sentiment had taken the menacing form of a silent and brooding anger, at least there were voices to declare that at "The Goat" the visitors were highly indignant, and that one of the strangers at the "Watkin's Arms" had dispatched a copy of the manifesto, with a commentary, to the *Times*. Indeed, it was in the public room of this latter establishment that public indignation found its chief exponent. Visitors from far-off lands, a traveller from Ireland, a gentleman from the United States, a German naturalist, with a green tin box and a pair of brown spectacles, were loud in declaring their sentiments, which amounted to this: that the possessors of any spot remarkable for its historic associations, of a much-prized marble or world-famed picture, were mere trustees for the public, who had an unimpeachable right to see, gaze on, and admire to their heart's content; these being privileges which in no wise detracted from the positive value of the object so worshipped, since there is no record of any garden whose perfume could be exhausted by smelling, nor any picture whose beauties mere sight could have absorbed. These observations, we are careful to record, were embodied in a very formal looking document, signed by about twenty names, and only awaited the selection of a suitable envoy to be transmitted to the cottage.

It is but a fair tribute to American courage to own that, where so many held back, reluctant and timid, the Yankee declared his readiness to go forward. He protested that he would rather like it. "It was just his grit," and that he was "main tired of sittin' there like a wounded skunk, with his head out of a hole." Whether from some lurking jealousy of the stranger, or some ungenerous disbelief in his address, the company did not accept his offer, or at least show such eagerness in the acceptance as they might, but broke up into twos and threes, discussing the event. While these deliberations went forward, a one-horse chaise drew up to the door, and a writing-desk and a small carpet-bag were deposited within it by the landlord, who, by a significant look towards his other guests, seemed to say, "Here's your opportunity! This is your man!"

"Who is he? Where is he going?" asked one, calling him aside.

"He's Mr. M'Kinlay, from London, the family law-agent, going over to the cottage."

He had but finished this speech, when a middle-aged man, with a high complexion, and short grey hair, without whiskers, appeared, conning over his bill as he came forward.

"You can scarce call it supper, Mr. Pugh," said he in an accent unmistakably Scotch—"the bit of fish, and the leg of a cold turkey—except that it was eaten at eleven at night. It was just a snack."

"It's only two-and-six, sir," said the other, humbly.

"Only! I'd like to know what you'd make it, man. That's the price of a right good meal up in town, and not served on a coarse tablecloth, nor over a sanded floor; and what's this 1s. 10d.? What's that?"

"Ale, sir. Your servant drank it very freely."

"If it only disagreed with him as it did with me, I'll make no objection to his excess. Are these gentlemen waiting to speak to me, for I don't think I have the honour——"

"Yes, sir," said a short, apoplectic-looking man, with a bald head. "We are strangers—strangers casually thrown into acquaintance at this hotel. We have come here from motives of pleasure, or health, or indolence—one common object having its attraction for us all—the far famed cottage of Dinasllyn. We have learned, however, to our infinite disappointment, that by a whim, a mere caprice—for it is impossible it could be more—of the persons who are the present occupants, the travellers, the tourists I will call them, are to be excluded in future, and all access refused to a spot which has its claims on the sympathies not alone of the Englishman, for I see at my side a learned professor from Jena, and a distinguished citizen of New York——"

"Kansas, stranger, Little Rock," said the Yankee, interrupting, and then advancing to the front. "Here's how it is, sir. Your friends up yonder ain't content to have God's gifts all their own, but they won't even let a man look at them. That ain't nature, and it ain't sense. We have drawn up our notions in a brief message. Are you a'mindin' of me, stranger?"

This question was not completely uncalled for, since for some few seconds Mr. M'Kinlay had turned to the landlord, and was occupied in the payment of his bill.

"Seventeen shillings and fourpence, leaving eightpence for Thomas, Mr. Pugh; and remember that your driver is now fully paid, unless I should stay to dinner."

"Are you a mindin' of *me*, sir?" said the Yankee with an energy that actually made the other start, and sent a deeper crimson to his cheeks.

"I must say, sir—I will say, that having no acquaintance with you, having never seen you till now——"

"All your loss, stranger, that's a fact! You're not the first man that regretted he did not know the length of *my* boot before he put his foot on my corns. You'll have to take them papers—do you mind?—you'll have to take them papers, and give them to your friends up yonder!"

"I'm neither a postman nor your messenger, sir," said M'Kinlay, getting into the chaise.

"You'll have to take them papers," and he laid them on the seat of the carriage as he spoke, "that's how it is! and as sure as my name is Dodge!—Herodotus Manning Dodge!—you'd better give an account of 'em when you drive out of that gate up there, for I'll wait for you, if it was till next fall!"

"That's mighty plain talking, anyhow," broke in a voice, with a very distinctive accent, "and a man needn't be much of a gentleman to understand it."

"Even a brief visit," cried out the first speaker.

"Just to see the cedars, or Clorinda's grotto," lisped out a female voice.

But Mr. M'Kinlay did not wait for more, but by an admonitory poke of his umbrella set his driver off at full speed, and was soon well out of both eye and earshot.

To say that Mr. M'Kinlay drove away in a towering passion—that he was excessively angry and indignant, would be the truth, but still not the whole truth, for he was also terribly frightened. There was in the tall Yankee's look, language, and gesture, a something that smacked of the bush, and the hickory-tree—a vague foreshadowing of Lynch law, or no law—that overpowered him. Such a man, within a reasonable distance of Scotland Yard, for instance, might not have proved so terrible; but here he was in the heart of the Welsh mountains, in the very spot of all others where there was every facility for a deed of violence. "He might throw me over that cliff, or pitch me into that quarry hole," muttered he; and the landscape at the moment offered both the illustrations to aid his fancy.

It was, then, in a tremor of mingled anger and terror that he drove up to the gate, and in no patient mood was it that he sat outside the padlocked portal till a messenger went up to the house with his card to obtain leave for his admission. The order was speedily given, and he passed in.

The brief interval of traversing the space between the gate-lodge and the cottage was passed by Mr. M'Kinlay in arranging his cravat, brushing the dust from his coat, and so far as might be, smoothing down any asperities that should have betrayed themselves in his features; for, though neither a young man nor a man of the world of fashion, he had his pretensions, the most cherished one of all which was a design upon the hand of Miss Georgina Courtenay. Had Miss Courtenay been in the full blaze of her beauty, as she was some eight or nine years before, Mr. M'Kinlay would never have dared to lift his eyes to her; had she even continued to live in town and mingle in that society where she had always lived and moved, he would not have dreamed of such a presumption. But Mr. M'Kinlay knew the world. He had seen an exiled Grand-Duke in a hansom cab, and had actually met a deposed Prince on a Margate steamer. In the changeful fortunes of life, the "price current" was the only test of anything. Railroads, and mines, and telegraphic companies rose and fell with the fluctuations of the market, and marriageable ladies might come one day to figure in the share list! Miss Georgina, however ungallant the confession, represented a security at a discount. She had gone down year by year, and at last ceased to be quoted. And yet "it was a very good thing." She had, none knew it better—very few so well—she had eighteen thousand pounds, besides expectations, the latter very reasonable, and promising in their way. Her connections were admirable—high enough to give him a very considerable lift socially, and yet not so elevated as to make his rise that of a mere "parvenu." Professionally, the advantage would be great, and lead to much parliamentary business, the carrying of local bills, and a deal of very profitable employment. He flattered himself that in most other respects, there was much the world would deem suitable. He was twelve—well, if you like, fourteen years her senior, but then neither was very young, and when a woman had reached we shall not say what of the thirties, her marrying was not subjected to the criticisms applied to the blushing bride of eighteen or twenty. Lastly, he was well off, had a capital business, a good house in a good street, was "well placed" amongst men of his class, and altogether favourably regarded by his betters. "She might do worse," muttered he, at the end of his rumination, as he descended from the chaise, with an amount of activity in his movements that showed he had detected the flounce of a muslin dress at the drawing-room window.

"All well, I hope, Rickards?" said he to the stout butler, who bowed his welcome in most gracious guise.

"Quite well, Mr. M'Kinlay—and, indeed, you look the same, sir."

"Nothing the matter with me, Rickards, that a little rest won't remedy. Over-work, over-work is my malady!"

Mr. Rickards sighed responsively; he had heard men speak of the affection, and the symptons they mentioned were quite appalling. "Her ladyship's not down yet, but Miss Georgina is in the drawing-room," added he, with great significance of manner. "Step this way, sir."

Miss Courtenay was busily engaged searching for a letter in her writing-desk, when the butler announced in his most emphatic manner, Mr. M'Kinlay; but she only turned her head round, and, with a weak smile, said, "Oh, Mr. M'Kinlay! I trust they did not keep you waiting on the road. You know we have been obliged to have the gate locked."

"I heard so. Indeed, I have heard of little else since my arrival, Miss Courtenay," said he, not altogether mastering the anger he felt at his cool reception. "I hope Lady Vyner is well."

"Yes, as well as she ever is. What a provoking thing it is to mislay a letter; but I suppose it is an oversight you have never committed. You have everything in order, docketted, pigeon-holed, and what not."

"Pardon me, I am the most careless of men. All about me is a chaos of confusion."

"Indeed!" said she, with a faint, very faint show of interest, as though quite unexpectedly aware of some favourable trait in his character. "Who would have thought it! It is a letter from my niece's governess I have lost, and with it all clue to her address."

"I can, perhaps, supply that," said Mr. M'Kinlay; "at least, if it be the town she stopped at while the yacht is being repaired."

"Exactly so. What's the name of it?"

"Here it is," said he, producing a small clasped note-book from which, after a brief search, he read, "Mademoiselle

Heinzleman's address will meanwhile be, 'Carrick's Royal Hotel, Westport, Ireland.'"

"What a blessing is red tapery after all!" said she, in a sort of soliloquy. "If there were not these routine people, what would become of us?"

"I am charmed that even my blemishes should have rendered you a service," said he, with a tingling cheek.

"I don't think my sister knows you are here," said she, ignoring all his remarks.

"I suspect Rickards must have told her," said he, half-stiffly.

"Just as likely not; he is getting so stupid—*so* old."

This was a very cruel speech to be so emphasized, for Rickards was only one year Mr. M,Kinlay's senior.

"He looks active, alert, and I'd not guess him above forty-six, or seven."

"I don't care for the number of his years, but he is old enough to be fussy and officious, and he has that atrocious activity which displays itself with certain middle-aged people by a quick short step, abrupt speech, and a grin when they don't hear you. Oh, don't you hate that deaf-man's smile?"

Mr. M'Kinlay would fain have smiled too, but he feared the category it would sentence him to.

"I'm afraid you expected to find my brother here, but he's away; he is cruising somewhere along the coast of Ireland."

"I was aware of that. Indeed, I am on my way to join him, and only diverged at Crewe to come over here, that I might bring him the latest advices from home."

"And are you going yachting?" said she, with a sort of surprise that sent the blood to M'Kinlay's face and even his forehead.

"No, Miss Courtenay, I trust not, for I detest the sea; but Sir Gervais wants my advice about this Irish estate he is so full of."

"Oh! don't let him buy anything in Ireland, I entreat of you, Mr. M'Kinlay, not to sanction this. None of us would ever go there, not even to look at it."

"I imagine the mischief is done."

"What do you mean by being done?"

"That the purchase is already made, the agreement ratified, and everything completed but the actual payment."

"Well, then, don't pay; compromise, contest, make difficulties. You legal people needn't be told how to raise obstacles. At all events, do anything rather than have an Irish property."

"I wish I had one."

"Well, I wish you had—that is if you are so bent upon it. But I must go and tell my sister this distressing news. I don't know how she'll bear it! By the way," added she, as she reached the door, "I shall find you here when I come back—you are not going away?"

"Certainly not without seeing Lady Vyner, if she will accord me that honour," said he, stiffly.

"Of course she'll see you," cried she, and left the room.

Left alone with his reflections, Mr. M‘Kinlay had not the pleasantest company. Had he mistaken all the relations between Miss Courtenay and himself, or was she changed to him—totally changed? Was it thus that they met at last? He knew that she always had a certain flippant manner, and that she was eminently what the French call *inconséquent;* but she was more, far more, now. The allusion to Rickard‘s age was a direct impertinence, and the question as to his yachting taste was a palpable sneer at the habits of his daily life.

"The case does not look well—certainly not well," murmured he, as he walked the room with his hands behind his back. "Many would throw up the brief, and say, 'Take a nonsuit.' Yes, most men would; but I'll do nothing rashly!" And with this wise resolve he took up a book, and began to read; but still the hours rolled on, and no one came. By the clock over the mantelpiece it was now four. Could it possibly be that it was two hours and a half since—since she had left him?

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD BACHELOR'S HOUSE.

IT is quite true Georgina forgot all about Mr. M‘Kinlay. The gardener had met her on her way, and presented her with a bouquet of Japanese roses—the real purple roses it was supposed never could be reared out of a Tycoon's garden; and so she hastened up to her sister's room, as totally oblivious of the man of law as though he had been hundreds of miles away. They talked pleasantly of flowers—flowers for the china vase, and flowers for the hair—they laughed at the incongruous blunders of the people who wore "wrong colours," and that "drab bonnet" they had seen last Sunday in church. They next discussed dress, and the impossibility of wearing anything "decent" on the dusty roads; and, lastly they ordered the ponies and the phaeton and drove out.

How charmingly pleasant are these lives of little cares and of little duties; where conscience has no burden that would be too weighty for the strength of childhood—where no torturing anxieties invade, no tormenting ambitions pursue—where the morning's stroll through the garden is the very type of existence, a ramble amidst fragrance, and fruit, and flowers, with no other call upon exertion than to enjoy! And what a teachable faculty is that same one of enjoyment. How it develops itself under good training and favourable opportunities.

These sisters had a very pleasant life, and they knew it; that is, they no more overlooked the stones in their path than their neighbours; but they thoroughly understood that Fate had accorded them a very smooth road, and one right easy to travel. They chatted gaily as they drove along the side of a brightly eddying river, through a glen of some miles in extent. The day was one of those mellow ones of August, tempered with a slight breeze, that gently moved the cloud-shadows on the mountains, adding at each change some new effect of light and colour. "Let us go and call on Sir Within," said Lady Vyner; "it would be a glorious day to see the old castle, and the mountain behind it." Her sister agreed at once; for though the drive was full eight miles, the road was beautiful all the way, and at its end was a grand old keep, Dalradern Castle, with a charming old bachelor for its owner, than whom none better understood how to do the honours of his house.

While the sisters push their smart ponies to a brisk trot, we shall take the opportunity to say a word of Sir Within Wardle. He was the last of a great Welsh family of large fortune and ancient name, but who had lived all his life away from England. He had been in diplomacy since his boyhood; he had joined an embassy in the Low Countries at the age of sixteen; and lived long enough to see the whole map of Europe new coloured.

It had been the dream of his existence to "come home"—to return to the temperate climate and genial air of England—to get back where the trees were really trees, and where grass was veritably green, and where people told the truth, and tradesmen were honest. Well, he did get back, but it was not to find everything as he had pictured it. The temperate climate rained a good deal. The genial air had a marked tendency to give bronchitis. The grass was unquestionably green, but so were they who walked in it, for wet feet were invariable. As to truthfulness in his own class, he had nothing to complain of; but he thought servants were pretty much as elsewhere, and as to his tradespeople, there was little to choose between Fleet Street and the "Graben," and Piccadilly was not a whit above the Rue de la Paix!

In fact, there were many things as he had hoped, and not a few that disappointed him. People, generally, were what he deemed more-narrow minded; they sat more in judgment over their neighbours than he liked; they were more inquisitive and less charitable. In his world, where he had passed fifty odd years, the charming people were admitted to be charming, though certain delinquencies chargeable to them, might have disparaged their claims to character. It was not held to the disadvantage of Beauty that discretion should not have united itself to loveliness, and Wit was just as highly appreciated as though its possessor had not been more than lucky with the dice-box. Sir Within, be it remarked, wanted none of these immunities on his own behalf. He had never been what is called a man of gallantry, never gambled. His great passion was a splendid house, and grand receptions. He liked great people, crowned heads, and after them coroneted ones. He revered grand-dukes and serene-highnesses; and it was not by any means improbable that in his homage to the great lay the secret of that tolerance, on the score of morals that marked him; for, be it said with respect, kings and kaisers have a habit of showing the world that they soar in a sphere above common proprieties, and can afford to do in ethics what they can do with the Bourse—go in for a rise or fall, as the whim seizes them.

To "come back" with tastes like these was a mistake, but to attempt to justify them was infinitely worse. Sir Within began to lecture his country neighbours on their hard heartedness and ungenerosity. He enumerated scores of people who had taken little scampers into vice, and come back to live more gorgeously on virtue. What anecdotes he had of ministers who had cheated at cards! Great men, excellent men in all other respects, unimpeachable in all their public acts, and pillars of the State they pertained to. He told of a society whose very laxity saved all friction, and which went on smoothly—for it always went downwards. The consequence may be anticipated. His neighbours—at least their wives—voted him an old monster of vice, corrupted by half a century of foreign iniquities. They refused his invitations, and neglected his advances. His presents of fruit—such fruit too!—were declined, and his society strictly avoided.

The Vyners, who only came to the neighbourhood for a few weeks in the year, scarcely knew anything of local feelings, and only heard that he never went out, and saw little company at home—facts which, when they came to be acquainted with him, struck them as strange, for he was eminently one made for society, and seemed to feel the raciest enjoyment in it. He had all that peculiar go and eagerness in him which pertains to men who talk well, and feel that they have this power.

Perhaps my reader may have met such a character—not that they exist as a class—but if he has done so, he will acknowledge that it is a very charming form of selfishness, and gifted with marvellous powers of pleasing. At all events, Lady Vyner and her sister delighted in him—most ungrateful had they been if they had not—for never was courtesy more polished, never homage more devoted or more respectful. Royalty could not have been received by him with a greater deference, and now as they drove up to the massive entrance of the castle, and the sharp clatter of the ponies' feet awoke the echoes of the solemn court-yard, Sir Within was promptly at his post to help them to descend; and as the wind blew his long white hair backwards, he stooped to kiss their hands with all the reverence of a courtier.

"Do you know, dear ladies," said he, "that I had a vision of this visit? It was revealed to me—I cannot say how—that you would come over here to-day, and I told Bernais to prepare the orangery: for," said I, "Bernais, I will offer *ces dames* no luncheon, but will insist on their taking an early dinner."

"What a tempting proposal!" said Lady Vyner, looking at Georgina, whose fiat was always needed to every project.

"I vote for being tempted," said Georgina, gaily; "but what do I see there—something new?"

"No, something old, but restored. Don't you remember the last day you were here saying that the silence of this old court wanted the pleasant plash of a fountain? and so I got these disabled nymphs and hamadryads remounted, and set them to blow their conchs and spout the cataracts as of yore."

"How beautiful it all is!"

"Curious enough, the figures are really good. Some worthy ancestor of mine had purchased this group at Urbino from some ruined Italian mansion; and, as a work of art, it is almost equal to a Luca della Robbia. The mistate is the era. It is not suited to this old dungeon. Here we are in the tenth century, and this group is cinque cento. Let me send it to the cottage. It would be perfect in your garden."

"Not for worlds. I couldn't think of it!"

"Don't think of it, but say 'Yes.' Remember, that in villa ornamentation nothing comes amiss; there are no incongruities."

"It is impossible, Sir Within—quite impossible."

"Don't imagine we have come here as brigands," said Miss Courtenay, smiling.

"When you carry away my heart, what matters what is left me!" said he, sighing.

Miss Courtenay looked down—it was a bashful look, but not a displeased one—and, somehow, more conscious than the compliment of so old a gentleman might seem to warrant.

"And so Sir Gervais likes Ireland?" said he, as he introduced them into the drawing-room.

"So much so, that I fear he has made a purchase of some property there."

"That is only a mistake when one feels that he must live on the spot he owns. Some witty Frenchman says: 'I used to fancy that I owned my furniture, but I found that it owned me. I was the bondsman of an old arm-chair, and the actual slave of a chest of drawers!' You laugh, ladies, but just see whether this old house or I be the master here."

"Well, it's not a very severe bondage after all," said Georgina, smiling.

"How pleasantly one discusses another's captivity! By the way, when are you all to come and pay me this long-promised visit? Remember the longer you defer payment, the larger grows the debt; your week is now a month."

"When Sir Gervais comes home, we shall be delighted."

"Why not be here when he arrives? How much pleasanter he'd find the house where your presence had imparted that charm that comes of female influence. You cannot guess how this old room, that I thought so dreary a while ago, looks positively beautiful now. Yes, Bernais, bring it in." This was said to the servant, who, after appearing at the door, made a hasty retreat. "It is the *menu* of our dinner, ladies, and my cook, M. Piquard, wishes to acquit himself with distinction. See, here is a query. 'Is the pheasant to be "aux huitres," or aux pointes d'asperges?' Decide."

"I should say with the asparagus," said Miss Courtenay.

"And your judgment is correct; the other is a mere compromise to a supposed English taste. A summer day's dinner is to the full banquet of mid-winter what a light 'aquarelle' is to an oil picture. You want grace, delicacy; you require elegance, transparency, softness; not depth, nor force, nor strong effect."

"What Sybarites you must deem us!" said Lady Vyner, laughing.

"I am repeating for you to-day a little dinner I once gave the Duchesse de Sagance. She was much admired at the time by the Archduke Charles of Austria; but forgive me if I am talking of forbidden themes."

"Oh, go on, Sir Within! We must implicitly bow to your discretion."

"Ah, if you do that, I'm ruined. You silence me at once!"

"You surely wouldn't have us say, 'Be indiscreet?'"

"No; but I'd have you say, 'Talk to us as if we were all at Vienna, at Milan, or at Naples.'"

"Neither my sister nor myself 'pose' for prudery, Sir Within; but the world says that you are—what shall I call it? —too—too—do help me to the word."

"How can I, when it is to my own blame? Who ever called on a prisoner to fill up his own indictment?"

"What the world means is, perhaps," broke in Georgina, "that Sir Within occasionally forgets his geography, and fancies at the foot of Snowdon that he is close to Vesuvius."

"I apprehend you," said he, smiling; "but confess, that dress is not more a question of climate than conversation; both one and the other are lighter in the south of Europe, and what is of more moment, with perfect safety, too; mark that, Mesdames, with perfect safety."

"It may be all very well for you, who are acclimatized, to say so," said Lady Vyner; "but bear in mind that we only passed one winter at Rome."

"And did you not like it? What a furious cataract of all manner of sensations is a first winter at Rome! Grandeur and littleness, sublimity and absurdity—the splendid St. Peter's and the slipshod priesthood—and, more ridiculous than all, our cockney population wandering over the Coliseum and Quirinal, not fully certain that they are getting the real article for their money, or whether Nero and Tiberius are not dear at the price paid for them. I often wish it were right for an ex-Envoy to give his note-book, or some extracts from it, to the world. Impressions of the B. S.—the British Subject, I mean—by a late Foreign Minister."

"Very amusing, doubtless; but very spiteful," said Miss Courtenay.

"Here comes Bernais to announce dinner, and rescue you from my tartness;" and, giving an arm to each of the ladies, he led them forward.

Valued reader, is it amongst the number of your experiences to have "assisted" at a dinner- -usually a Russian one—where, without having found anything pre-eminently good to eat, you are given to understand they all cost fabulous sums—that the fricassee you scarcely tasted was brought from the frontier of China, and the fish, that seemed flavourless, came by estafette from the Caspian? Such, in a certain way, was Sir Within's conversation; it sparkled with great people—kings glittered, and queens bespangled it; it was evidently a dear article to have acquired, but, beyond that, it possessed little value. Yet, "for all that and all that," his guests liked it. To be sure, it was admirably aided; his "little dinner," as he modestly styled it, was a banquet, not in ponderous detail, or duration, but in the perfect selection and the exquisite delicacy of all that composed it.

And did he not relish the success he achieved—the double success of his cook and of himself! If there be a time when egotism is less odious than at others, it is when a host expatiates on the pains he has taken to feed you. The little selfish vaingloriousness of the moment is so readily pardoned, while the truffle is on your fork, or the ruby claret half way to your lips.

It was towards the close of the dinner that Sir Within, adroitly turning the topic from the meats to the guests, was discussing, with some knowledge of the subject, the people who made the pleasantest dinner company, and showing how an accomplished host makes the light talkers do duty at the first course, using them as mere skirmishers, who are to fall back and be ignored as the great engagement comes on. "I flatter myself," said he, "that I can manage most classes of men, though I own there is one that totally defies me—that is to say, he is so obstinately self-willed, and so professionally trained to persistence, that he deems it a triumph. I mean your lawyer!"

"Oh, Laura! what have I done!" exclaimed Georgina, laying her hand on her sister's arm, and staring half wildly at her.

"What is it? What is the matter?"

"Was there ever such a blunder—how shall we get over it?"

"What is it then? tell it?" cried Lady Vyner, eagerly.

"I forget all about him—utterly—completely forgot!"

"About whom?"

"Mr. M'Kinlay, the lawyer. He arrived this morning, came to the cottage very early, saying he was on his way to Ireland to meet Gervais, and only ran over from Crewe to see us; I left him to tell you that he was there. I had it in my head when I quitted the room, but what drove it out again, or what occurred to make me forget it, I cannot now imagine."

In spite of all the annoyance of the incident, Lady Vyner laughed immoderately, and so did Sir Within, and so, at last, did Miss Courtenay, and the mirth was kept up by all sorts of fanciful conceits as to what the lawyer must have thought, said, or done.

"He has driven away in a towering passion; he's hot-tempered at times, I know," said Lady Vyner.

"No, no! you'll find him very comfortably installed when you get back," said Sir Within. "He'll be vexed, he'll be angry, doubtless; but as a minister plenipotentiary vents his ill-temper in a despatch; your man of law consigns all his indignation, more practically, to his bill of costs. What an avalanche of six-and-eightpences will fall on your forgetfulness."

"We must hasten to repair the disaster. Sir Within, would you oblige me by ordering our ponies? I know you'll forgive our abrupt leave-taking."

"I shall never forgive the cause of it. Why not let me send a messenger over to ask him, saying I had insisted on detaining you?"

"Oh, on no account! Besides, he's a touchy person, and my husband is most tenacious regarding him. I must hasten back and make my explanations in person."

"I don't know how I am to face him at all!" cried Georgina.

"I'd certainly not try," said Sir Within.

Vague as the mere words were, they were uttered with a significance that plainly said, "You might stay where you are;" and Miss Courtenay evidently so read them, for her cheek reddened as she turned away.

Lady Vyner, however, went on: "I don't think we shall have any difficulty about it—at least, I hope not—though what I'm to say, and how to say it, I cannot imagine."

"Throw me into the breach," said Sir Within; "say that, hearing of his arrival, I begged a visit from you—that I wanted some legal advice—I required a draft of—what shall I say?—I can scarcely be going to be married. Let it be a will, then."

"Oh no, not a will, Sir Within!" said Georgina, with a very soft smile.

"It shall be whatever you decide for it," said he, assisting her with her shawl as he spoke.

"Do you ever mean to come over to breakfast with us?" asked Lady Vyner. "The promise has been made and renewed, I think, a dozen times."

"May I say next Sunday, then?"

"And you'll promise to come to church with us afterwards?" cried Lady Vyner.

He muttered something with a smile to Miss Courtenay, and she turned away abruptly, but ere she drew down her veil her face betokened the reverse of displeasure.

Though as they drove homeward, the unpleasant explanation that lay before them engaged much of their thoughts, taxing all their address how to encounter its difficulty, yet, from time to time, Georgina would return to talk of the house they had just quitted, and the host.

"It is easy enough to see why our straightlaced neighbours do not take to him," said she; "he is too much a man of the world—too tolerant and forgiving for their notions."

"A little too lax, also, for the proprieties of English life," added Lady Vyner.

"For its hypocrisies, if you like, Laura. I'm certain people are pretty much the same everywhere, though the way they talk about themselves may be very different."

"I suspect he has made a conquest, Georgy," said her sister, laughing; "or rather, that his magnificent old castle, and his Vandykes, and his pineries, and his conservatory have——"

"No! that I protest against. His 'accessories,' as the French would call them, are undeniable. It is a house absolutely princely in all its details; but I think he himself is the gem of the collection. He is courteous and so pleasant, so anecdotic, and full of all manner of *à propos*, and then so utterly unlike every one else that one knows."

"I suppose there lies his chief attraction. We have to measure him with people all whose thoughts and ideas are so essentially homely, and who must of necessity be eternally talking of themselves—that is, of their own turnpike, their own turnips, and their own cock pheasants."

"Is it not strange that he never married?" said Georgina, after a silence.

"I don't think so. He's not a man that would be likely to marry, and very far from being one that a woman would like to take as a husband."

"Do you think so—do you really think so?"

"I'm certain of it. All those charming little schemes for our entertainment that captivated us a while ago, show a degree of care and attention bestowed on little things which would make life a perfect servitude. Cannot you imagine him spending his mornings giving audience to his cook, and listening to the report of his gardener? I fancy I see him in the midst of a levee of domestics, gravely listening to the narrative of the last twenty-four hours of his household."

"So far from that," said Georgina, warmly, "he told me Bernais did everything—engaged and discharged servants, changed furniture, re-arranged rooms, and, in fact, managed little daily 'surprises' for him, that he said, compensated for much of the solitude in which he lived."

"But why does he live in solitude? Why not go back to the life and the places that habit has endeared to him?"

"He told me to-day that he intended to do so; and that he is only waiting for the visit of a certain relative, Mr. Ladarelle after which he means to set out for Italy."

"Ladarelle is the great banker, and, if I mistake not, his heir."

"Yes. Sir Within says that they scarcely know each other, and have all that dislike and distrust that usually separate the man in possession and the man in expectancy."

"One can fancy how distasteful his heir must be to a man like Sir Within Wardle," said Lady Vyner.

"To any man, sister," broke in Georgina—"to any man who only knows the person as the inheritor of his fortune. I declare I think Sir Within spoke of the Ladarelles with much forbearance, aware, as he is, that they are coming down here to see in what state of repair the castle is, and whether the oaks are being thinned more actively than a mere regard for their welfare would exact."

"Did Sir Within say that?" asked Lady Vyner, with a laugh.

"No; but I guessed it!"

"Well, he supplied the text for your theory?"

"In a measure, perhaps. It was when you went with Groves to look at the large cactus he told me this, and mentioned that, by a singular provision, though the estate is strictly entailed, he could charge the property to any amount with jointure if he married; and perhaps, said he, my worthy relatives were anxious to satisfy themselves that this event has not, nor is very likely to occur."

"Not now, certainly?" said Lady Vyner, with a saucy laugh.

"I don't know. There are many women well to do, and well off, would marry him."

"That is to say, there are a considerable number of women who would sacrifice much for money."

Miss Courtenay was silent; when she next spoke, it was about the evening—the air was growing fresh, and the twilight deepening. "I wonder in what mood we are to find Mr. M'Kinlay—if we are to find him at all."

"I own it would be very awkward; but I am such a coward about meeting him, that I half wish he had gone away, and that we were left to make our lame excuses in a letter."

"I have to confess that the matter sits very lightly on *my* conscience," said Georgina, "though I am the real delinquent. I don't like him, and I shall not be very unhappy if he knows it."

"Possibly enough, but such a breach of all politeness——"

"My dear Laura, he has met this incident, or something very like, it a hundred times. Earls and viscounts have made appointments with him and forgotten him; he has been left standing on that terrace or pacing moodily up that street, for hours long, and as Sir Within said very smartly, consoled by the item that would record it in the bill of costs."

"Yes, I remember the remark: it struck me as the only bit of vulgarity about him."

"Vulgarity! Sir Within Wardle vulgar!"

"Well, I have no other word for it, Georgy. It was the observation that might readily have come from any ordinary and common-place person, and sounded unsuitably from the lips of a very polished gentleman."

"Poor Sir Within! if in a gloomy moment you may be wondering to yourself what harsh or envious things your wealth, your splendour, and your taste may have provoked from us, I am certain that you never imagined that the imputation of being vulgar was one of them!"

Fortunately there was no time to continue a theme so threatening to be unpleasant, for already they were at the gate lodge, and a loud summons with the bell had announced their arrival.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. M'KINLAY'S TRIALS.

Mr. M'Kinlay was awakened from a pleasant nap over the "Man of Feeling," which he had persuaded himself he was reading with all the enjoyment it had once afforded him, by the French clock over the mantel-piece performing a lively waltz, and then striking five!

He started, rubbed his eyes, and looked about him, not very certain for some minutes where he was. The hum of the bees the oppressive perfume of the sweet-brier and the jessamine, and the gentle drip-drip of a little trickling rivulet over some rock-work, seemed still to steep his senses in a pleasant dreamy languor, and a sort of terror seized him that the ladies might possibly have come in, and found him there asleep. He rang the bell and summoned Rickards at once.

"Where are the ladies?" asked he, eagerly.

"Not come back yet, sir. It's very seldom they stay out so long. I can make nothing of it."

"You told her ladyship I was here, didn't you?"

"I told Miss Georgina, sir, and of course she told my lady."

"What's your dinner-hour?"

"Always early, sir, when Sir Gervais is from home. My lady likes four, or half-past."

"And it's five now!"

"Yes, sir; a quarter-past five. It's the strangest thing I ever knew," said he, going to the window, which commanded a view of the road at several of its windings through the valley. "We have an excellent lake trout for dinner; but by good luck it's to be grilled, not boiled, or it would be ruined utterly."

"Capital things, those red trout," said M'Kinlay, to whom like most of his craft, and way of life, the pleasures of the table offered great temptations. "Is your cook a good one, Rickards?"

"Only a woman, sir; but by no means bad. Sir Gervais always takes M. Honoré with him on board the yacht; but you'll see, sir, that she knows how to roast, and we have a sweet saddle of Welsh mutton to-day, if it's not over-done."

"That's what I'm afraid of, Rickards," said the lawyer; and if a sigh ever denoted sorrow, his did as he spoke. "Is the mutton small?"

"Very small, sir. Mountain mutton."

"And of course it will be done to rags! She serves it with currant jelly, I suppose?"

"No, sir, with Guava. Sir Gervais prefers it."

"And what else was there on your bill-of-fare for to-day?"

"A very simple dinner, sir. Partridges on toast, a salad of white truffles, and a roast hare."

"Quite enough, quite enough. Do you bring your wine down with you!"

"Only the Madeira, sir. Sir Gervais gets some claret over from an Irish house called Sneyd's, which he calls very drinkable."

"So do I, too: very drinkable, indeed; and your Madeira, you say, you bring with you. I say, Rickards, I think a glass of it and a biscuit wouldn't be amiss, if I'm to wait much longer."

"I was just thinking the same, sir; and if you'll step into the dining-room, and take a morsel of game pie, I'll fetch the Madeira out of the sun. It's fine and mellow by this time."

"Is this your woman cook's performance?" said Mr. M'Kinlay, as he helped himself for the second time to the pie.

"Yes, sir; and she'd do better, too, if it wasn't that the ladies don't like so much jelly. Here's a fine old truffle, sir!"

"She's a valuable woman—a very valuable woman. Tell her, Rickards, that I drank her health in a bumper. Yes, up to the brim with it. She shall have all the honours."

"Something sweet, sir? A little cherry tart?"

"Well, a little cherry tart I'll not object to. No, no, Rickards, don't open champagne for me."

"It's in the ice, sir, and quite ready."

"Let it stay there. I'm very simple about both eating and drinking. I'd not have made a bad hermit, if I hadn't been a lawyer."

"No, indeed, sir! I never saw a gentleman so easily pleased. You're not like Mr. Grenfell, sir, that has the bill of fare brought up every morning to his dressing-room; ay, and M. Honoré himself, too, summoned, just as if it was before a magistrate, to explain what's the meaning of this, and why he doesn't do the other."

"Your master permits this?"

"He likes, it sir; he laughs heartily at it."

"And the ladies, do they like it?"

"Oh, Mr. Grenfell only comes over to Beau Park when the ladies is away, sir, up in town or at the sea-side."

"He's no favourite of theirs, then?"

"I don't believe they ever saw him, sir. At all events, he was never down with us when we were all at home."

"I suspect I know why," said M'Kinlay, knowingly.

"Yes, sir," replied Rickards, as knowingly, while he took up a jar of pickled onions from the sideboard, and held it ostentatiously forward.

"You're right, Rickards, you've hit it correctly. One glass more of that admirable wine. What's that great ringing at the gate? Is that your mistress?"

"No, sir. The lodge people have orders never to keep her waiting; they always have a look-out when she's coming. There it is again. If you'll excuse me a moment, sir, I'd better step out and see what it means!"

The permission was graciously accorded, and Mr. M'Kinlay emptied the last of the Madeira into his glass, discussing with himself whether the world had anything really more enjoyable to offer than a simple cottage life, with a good cook, and a capital cellar! Little heed did he give to the absence of Rickards, nor was he in the least aware that the bland butler had been above a quarter of an hour away, when he entered flushed and excited.

"It's the same as a burglary, sir, there's no difference; and it's by good luck you are here to declare the law of it!"

"What is the matter—what has happened, Rickards?"

"They're in the drawing-room, sir; they walked in by the open windows; there was no keeping them out."

"Who are in the drawing-room?"

"The tourists, sir," exclaimed Rickards. "The tourists! The people that would force their way into Windsor Castle and go through it, if the King was at his dinner there!"

Strong in a high purpose, and bold with the stout courage of that glorious Madeira, Mr. M'Kinlay arose. "This is an unparalleled outrage," cried he; "follow me, Rickards;" and he took his way to the drawing-room. Though the noise and tumult bespoke the presence of several people, there were not above half a dozen in the room. One, however, a pale sickly-looking young man, with long hair which required everlasting tossing of his head to keep it out of his eyes, sat at the piano, playing the most vigorous chords, while over his shoulder leaned a blue-eyed, fair, ringletted lady, whose years—past the forties—rather damaged the evident determination she evinced to be youthful and volatile.

"Do, Marmy, do dearest, there's a love," said she, with the faintest imaginable lisp, "do compothe something. A Fanthasia, on visiting Dinasllyn. A dhream——"

"Pray be quiet, Celestina!" said he, with a wave of his hand. "You derange me!"

"Have they got a 'catalog' of the gimcracks?" exclaimed a nasal voice that there was no mistaking. I a'n't posted in brass idols and boxwood saints, but I'd like to have 'em booked and ticketed."

"Are you aware, gentlemen and ladies," said Mr. M'Kinlay, with a voice meant to awaken the very dullest sense of decorum—"are you aware that you are in the house of a private gentleman, without any permission or sanction on his part?"

"Oh, don't, don't disturb him, sir," broke in the ringletted lady. "You'll never forgive yourself if you spoil it;" and she pointed to the artist, who had now let all his hair fall forward, after the fashion of a Skye terrier, and sat with his head drooped over the piano, and his hands suspended above the keys.

"Say what for the whole bilen," cried the Yankee. "It ain't much of a show; but I'll take it over to New York, and charge only twenty-five cents for the reserved seats!"

"I repeat, sir," exclaimed M'Kinlay, "your presence here, and that of all your companions, is a most unreasonable intrusion—a breach of all propriety—one of those violations of decency, which, however practised, popular, and approved of in a certain country, neither distinguished for the civilization of its inhabitants, nor for their sense of refinement——"

"Is it Ireland you mane, sir—is it Ireland?" said a short, carbuncled-nosed little man, with a pair of fiery red eyes. "Say the word if it is."

"It is not Ireland, sir. I respect the Irish. I esteem them."

"Could you get them to be quiet, Celestina?" said the artist, faintly; "could you persuade the creatures to be still?"

"Hush, hush!" said she, motioning with both her hands.

A tremendous crash now resounded through the room. It was Mr. Herodotus M. Dodge, who, in experimenting with his umbrella on a Sèvres jar, to detect if it were cracked, had smashed it to atoms, covering the whole floor with the fragments.

"Send for the police! Tell the porter to lock the gate and fetch the police!" shouted M'Kinlay. "I trust to show you, sir, that you're not in Fifteenth-street, or Forty-sixth Avenue. I hope to prove to you that you're in a land of law and order."

Overcome by his rage, he followed Rickards out of the room, declaring that he'd make all England ring with the narrative of this outrage.

The legal mind, overbalanced for an instant, suddenly recovered its equanimity, and he began to reflect how far he was justified in a forcible detention. Would "a claim lie" for false imprisonment? Were he to detain them, too, what should be his charge? Was it a trespass? Had they been warned off? "Wait a moment, Rickards," said he; "I must think a minute or two. There's a difficulty here. Where a person, passing in the street, smashes accidentally—it must be accidentally—a pane of plate-glass, of the value of, let us say, five-and-twenty or thirty guineas, the law only holds him responsible for the damage of an ordinary window-pane; so that here it will be quite open to the defence to show that this man imagined he was breaking a common jug, a mere earthenware pipkin. It is, then, to the trespass we must look. Call the lodge-keeper; say I wish to have a word with him."

While Rickards hastened on his errand, Mr. M'Kinlay sat down to ponder carefully over the case. Your men conversant with great causes in equity and weighty trials at bar, are nervously fearful of meddling with the small cases which come before petty tribunals. They really know little about them, and are almost certain to fail in them; and they feel—very naturally—ashamed at the sorry figure they must exhibit in such failures.

"They are all gone, sir—they've made a regular retreat of it—not one left."

"Who—who are gone?"

"Them tourists, sir. They overtook me as I went down the avenue, and made George open the gate; and away they are, the whole of 'em."

"I'm not sorry for it, Rickards. I declare I'm not sorry. It would cost more time and more trouble to follow them up than they're worth; and I am certain, besides, Sir Gervais wouldn't have the affair in the newspapers for ten times the amount of the damage they have done him. What's the noise without—who's coming now?"

"My Lady!" exclaimed Rickards, and hastened out to receive her.

Mr. M'Kinlay could notice that a short dialogue took place between the ladies and the butler before they entered the door, and that they both laughed at something he was telling them. Was the story that amused them of him, or of the invasion? He had not time to consider when they entered.

"How d'ye do, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said Lady Vyner, quietly. "We've kept you very long waiting, I fear. You may serve dinner at once, Rickards. Mr. M'Kinlay will excuse our dining in morning dress, Georgina."

"I should hope so," said her sister, with a very saucy toss of the head.

"Your Ladyship will excuse my not remaining to dinner," said he, with a marked coldness. "I only wanted to see you, and ask if you had any commissions for Sir Gervais."

"No, there's nothing, I fancy. I wrote yesterday—I think it was yesterday."

"Tell him not to meddle with Irish property, and come away from that country as soon as he can," said Georgina.

"Say the garden is looking beautiful since the rain," said Lady Vyner, rising. "Good-bye, and a pleasant journey!"

"Good-bye!" said Georgina, giving him the tips of her fingers.

And Mr. M'Kinlay bowed and took his leave, carrying away as he went very different thoughts of cottage life and its enjoyments from those he might have felt had he gone when he had finished the last glass of Madeira.

CHAPTER X.

THE SHEBEEN.

Just as we see on the confines of some vast savage territory one solitary settlement that seems to say, "Here civilization ends, beyond this the tracts of cultivated men are unknown," so there stood on the borders of a solitary lake in Donegal—Lough Anare—a small thatched house, over whose door an inscription announced "Entertainment for Man and Beast," the more pretentious letters of the latter seeming to indicate that the accommodation for Beast was far more likely to prove a success than that intended for humanity.

What imaginable spirit of enterprise could have induced Mr. O'Rorke to have established an inn in such a region is not easy to guess. To the north of Lough Anare lay a vast untravelled, almost roadless, district. Great mountains and deep valleys, wild plains of heather, enclosing lakes, with islands, sometimes mere rocks, sometimes covered with an oak scrub—last remnants of primeval forests—succeeded each other apparently without end. A miserable shealing, usually padlocked on the outside, was all that betokened habitation, and a living being was very rarely met with. It is true there was scenery which for grandeur and beauty might have vied with the most vaunted spots on the island. Mountain gorges far finer than Dunluce, lakes more varied in shape, and with margins bolder in outline and richer in colour than Killarney, and coast-line with which the boasted Glengariff could not for a moment compete, all destined to remain as unknown as if they lay thousands of miles away in some Indian sea.

A great proportion of this territory was the property of the University of Dublin—endowment made in the time of Queen Elizabeth, when probably all lands without the pale had about the same value; some of it pertained to a wealthy English noble, who, until the accident of a governmental survey, had never so much as cared to ascertain its limits, and who made the first use of his knowledge by announcing for sale the lands of Mac-na-Morroch, Knochlifty, Kilmacooran, and Derryvaragh; in all, nigh fifty thousand acres of mountain, bog, callow, and lake, whose great capabilities, whether for sheep-farming, fishing, for the quarries of marble, or the immense mineral resources, were vouched for by a roll of scientific names, whose very titular letters enforced conviction. If the pen of an imaginative writer might have been employed in depicting the stores of wealth and fortune that lay here entombed, no fancy could have exaggerated the natural loveliness of the landscape. All that was wild and grotesque in outline, with all that was most glowing in colour, were there; and when on the nameless lakes the setting sun added his glory to the golden purple of their reflecting light, the scene became one of such gorgeous splendour as Art would not have dared to imitate.

The little inn we have just mentioned stood on a rocky eminence which projected from the mountain-side, and could be seen for miles off, more conspicuous, besides, by a large green flag, with a harp in the centre, which by the patriotism of Mr. O'Rorke flaunted its folds to the wild mountain breezes, as though enjoying in the solitude an immunity which the Saxon might have resented elsewhere. Tim O'Rorke was indeed one who had "suffered for Ireland." Four several times had he figured in Crown Prosecutions, and both fine and imprisonment had been his portion. On the last occasion, however, either that national enthusiasm was cooling down, or that suspicions of Tim's honesty were getting abroad, the subscription for his defence was almost a failure. No imposing names headed the list, and the sums inscribed were mean and contemptible. Unable to fee the great bar, to retain which, perhaps, formed the grandest triumph of his life, O'Rorke decided to defend himself, and in the course of his defence launched forth into a severe and insulting castigation of his party, who, after using up his youth and manhood in their cause, left him, when old and broken and dispirited, to the merciless cruelty of his enemies. He read aloud in open court the names of the powerful and wealthy men who at first stood by him, and then, with a shameless insolence, contrasted them with the ignoble friends who remained to him. He recited the proud sums once contributed, and, amidst the laughter of the court, ridiculed the beggarly half-crowns that now represented Irish patriotism. The verdict was against him, and once more he was sent back to Kilmainham, to serve out a two years' sentence, this time unalleviated by the sympathy of any friends, or the kind wishes of any partisans. His sentence completed, he made two or three efforts to reinstate himself in public esteem; he established an eating-house called "The Rebel's Home," he instituted an evening paper entitled the *Pike*, he invented a coat-button marked '98, but somehow friends and enemies had become wearied of him. It was seen that he was one of those who neither have the power of good nor evil, that he could be of no use to his own, no injury to others, and the world dropped him—dropped him as it does its poor and disreputable relatives, taking no heed of his gaunt looks nor his tattered raiment, and by this tacit indifference showed that the mass of mankind can behave on certain occasions pretty much as would an individual man. Tim threatened, stormed, and reviled; he vowed vengeance and menaced disclosures; he swore that his revelations would impeach some of the highest in the land, and he intimated that up to a certain day he was yet appeasable. Threats however were not more successful than entreaties, and Tim, gathering together a few pounds, under the plea of departure for Australia, quitted the scene he had so long troubled, and was heard of no more.

For years he had continued to exist in some fashion or other—poaching the chief source—in the wild spot we have just described; and it was on the rock in front of his door, with a short pipe in his mouth, that he now lay stretched, on a fine autumn morning, lazily gazing down the valley, where at a great distance off he could detect a small speck upon the road, intimating that rarest of all events, the approach of a jaunting car. He threw his glance upwards to see that his flag disported its folds to the air, and to the sign over his door—"The Vinegar Hill, by T. O'Rorke, Entertainment for Man or Beast"—to be sure that all was in order, and he then smoked quietly on and watched the road.

By a landslip which had occurred several years before, and whose effects had never been remedied, the road was blocked up about a mile from the little inn, and travellers, desirous of its accommodation, were obliged to continue their journey on foot. Whether from the apathy of hope deferred, or calculating on the delay that must thus intervene, Mr. O'Rorke, saw two persons descend from the car, and, each taking his carpet-bag, set out to walk, without the slightest movement on his part to provide for their reception; and this, though he was himself cook, waiter, and housemaid—all that the inn possessed of master or attendant.

Mr. O'Rorke's experience of travellers included but two categories, each of them rare enough in their visitations. They either came to shoot grouse or convert the natives. All who were not sportsmen were missionaries. A certain amount of peril attended both pursuits. The people were a wild semi-civilized set, who saw with jealousy a stranger amongst them, and certain hints palpable enough not to be mistaken intimated to the lovers of sport, as well as the distributors of tracts, that their pursuits were dangerous ones; and thus, in time, the numbers decreased year by year, till at last the advent of a traveller was a rare event.

The two who now ascended the rocky path had neither guns nor fishing-tackle—as little had they of missionaries in their aspect—and he watched them with a lazy curiosity as they approached.

"Are you Mr. O'Rorke?" cried the first who came forward, who was our acquaintance Sir Gervais Vyner.

"Yes, my name is O'Rorke."

"And the owner of this inn, I take it?" asked Grenfell, somewhat haughtily.

"The same."

"Is this your usual way of receiving strangers, my friend, or is your present manner an especial politeness to ourselves?"

"Can you let us have a dinner, and make up a couple of rooms?" broke in Vyner hastily. "We should like to stop here a few days."

"You can see the rooms, whether they'll do for you or not; such as they are, you can have them, but I can't make them better."

"And for eating what can you give us?"

"Mutton always—fish and game when there's the season for them—and poteen to wash them down."

"That is the illicit spirit, isn't it?" asked Grenfell.

"Just as illicit as anything else a man makes of his own produce for his own use; just as illicit as the bread that is made of his own corn."

"You're a politician, I see," said Grenfell, with a sneering laugh. "I half suspected it when I saw your green flag there."

"If I hadn't been one, and an honest one too, I'd not be here to-day," said he, with an energy greater than he had shown before. "Have you anything to say against that flag?"

"Of course he has not. Neither he nor I ever saw it before," said Vyner.

"Maybe you'll be more familiar with it yet; maybe the time isn't far off when you'll see it waving over the towers of Dublin Castle!"

"I am not aware that there are any towers for it to wave over," said Grenfell, mockingly.

"I'll tell you what there are! There are hills and mountains that our fathers had as their own; there are plains and valleys, that supported a race braver and better than the crafty Saxons that overcame them; there are holy churches, where your faith was taught before we ever heard of Harry the eighth and his ten wives!"

"You are giving him more than the Church did," said Grenfell.

"I don't care whether they were ten or ten thousand. He is your St. Peter, and you can't deny him!"

"I wish I could deny that I don't like this conversation," said Vyner. "My friend and I never came here to discuss questions of politics or polemics. And now about dinner. Could you let us have it at three o'clock; it is just eleven now?"

"Yes, it will be ready by three," said O'Rorke, gravely.

"The place is clean enough inside," whispered Grenfell, as he came from within, "but miserably poor. The fellow seems to have expended all his spare cash in rebellious pictures and disloyal engravings."

"He is an insupportable bore," muttered Vyner; "but let us avoid discussion with him, and keep him at a distance."

"I like his rabid Irishism, I own," said Grenfell, "and I intend to post myself up, as the Yankees say, in rebellious matters before we leave this."

"Is that Lough Anare, that sheet of water I see yonder?"

"Yes," said O'Rorke.

"There's a ruined tower and the remains of seven churches, I think, on an island there?"

"You'd like to draw it, perhaps?" asked O'Rorke, with a cunning curiosity in his eye.

"For the present, I'd rather have a bathe, if I could find a suitable spot."

"Keep round to the westward there. It is all rock along that side, and deep water close to the edge. You'll find the water cold, if you mind that."

"I like it all the better. Of course, George, you'll not come? You'll lie down on the sward here and dose or dream till I come back."

"Too happy, if I can make sleep do duty for books or newspapers," yawned out Grenfell.

"Do you want a book?" asked O'Rorke.

"Yes, of all things. What can you give me?"

He returned to the house and brought out about a dozen books. There were odd volumes of the press, O'Callaghan's "Celts and Saxons," and the Milesian Magazine, profusely illustrated with wood-cuts of English cruelty in every imaginable shape that human ingenuity could impart to torture.

"That will show you how we were civilized, and why it takes so long to do it," said O'Rorke, pointing to an infamous print, where a celebrated drummer named Hempenstall, a man of gigantic stature, was represented in the act of hanging another over his shoulder, the artist having given to the suffering wretch an expression of such agony as no mere words would convey.

"This fellow is intolerable," muttered Vyner, as he turned away, and descended the rocky path. Grenfell, too, appeared to have had enough of his patriotic host, for he stretched himself out on the green sward, drawing his hat over his eyes, and giving it to be seen that he would not be disturbed.

O'Rorke now retreated to the kitchen to prepare for his guests' entertainment, but he started with astonishment as he entered. "What, Kitty, is this you?" cried he; "when did you come?"

The question was addressed to a little girl of some ten or eleven years old, who, with her long golden hair loose on her shoulders, and her cheeks flushed with exercise, looked even handsomer than when first we saw her in the ruined Abbey at Arran, for it was the same child who had stood forward to claim the amber necklace as her right.

"My grandfather sent me home," said she, calmly, as she threw the long locks back from her forehead, "for he had to stay a day at Murranmore, and if he's not here to-morrow morning I'm to go on by myself."

"And was that all you got by your grand relation, Kitty?" said he, pointing to the necklace that she still wore.

"And isn't it enough?" answered she, proudly; "they said at the funeral that it was worth a king's ransom."

"Then they told you a lie, child, that's all; it wouldn't bring forty shillings—if it would thirty—to-morrow."

"I don't believe you, Tim O'Rorke," said she, boldly; "but it's just like you to make little of what's another's."

"You have the family tongue if you haven't their fortune," said he, with a laugh. "Are you tired, coming so far?"

"Not a bit; I took the short cut by Lisnacare, and came down where the waterfall comes in winter, and it saved more than four miles of the road."

"Ay, but you might have broken your neck."

"My neck was safe enough," said she, saucily.

"Perhaps you could trust you feet if you couldn't your head," said he, mockingly.

"I could trust them both, Tim O'Rorke; and maybe they'd both bring me farther and higher than yours ever did you."

"There it is again; it runs in your blood; and there never was one of your name that hadn't a saucy answer."

"Then don't provoke what you don't like," said she, with a quivering lip, for though quick at reply she was not the less sensitive to rebuke.

"Take a knife and scrape those carrots, and, when you've done, wash those radishes well."

The girl obeyed without a word, seeming well pleased to be employed.

"Did she leave any money behind her?" asked he, after a pause.

"No, none.

"And how did he treat you?—was he civil to you all?"

"We never saw him."

"Not see him! how was that? Sure he went to the wake?"

"He did not. He sent us 'lashins' of everything. There was pork and potatoes, and roast hens and ducks, and eggs and tea, and sugar and whisky, and cakes of every kind."

"But why didn't he come in amongst you to say that you were welcome, to wish you a good health, and the time of the year?"

"I don't know."

"And your grandfather bore that?"

She made no answer, but her face became crimson.

"I suppose it was all right; he wanted to show you that it was all over between him and you, and that when she was gone you didn't belong to him any more."

Two heavy tears rolled along the hot and burning cheeks of the child, but she never spoke.

"Your old grandfather's well changed, Kitty, from what I knew him once, or he wouldn't have borne it so quietly. And what did you get for your journey?"

"We got all her clothes—elegant fine clothes—and linen—two big boxes full, and knives and forks, and spoons and plates, that would fill two dressers as big as that. And this," and she lifted the amber beads as she spoke, with a flashing eye—"and this besides."

"He knew you well; he treated you just the way they treat the wild Indians in the Rocky Mountains, where they buy all that they have in the world for an old brass button or a few spangles. In his eyes you were all poor savages, and no more."

"I wish I never set foot in your house, Tim O'Rorke," said she, throwing down the knife, and stamping her bare foot with anger. "'Tis never a good word for man or woman comes out of your mouth, and if it wasn't so far to go I'd set off now."

"You're the making of a nice one," said he, with a sneering laugh.

"I'm the making of what will be far above you one day," said she, and her large blue eyes dilated, and her nostrils expanded with passion.

"Go down to the well and fill that pitcher," said he, calmly. And she took the vessel, and tripped as lightly on the errand as though she had not come seventeen long miles that same morning.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LEGEND OF LUTTRELL AND THE ——

Doubtless the fresh free mountain air had its influence, and something, too, lay in the surprise at the goodness of the fare, but Vyner and Grenfell sat at the open door after their dinner in the pleasant frame of mind of those who have dined to their satisfaction, and like to reflect on it.

"I can almost look with complacency on your idea of an

Irish property, Vyner, when I think of that mutton," said Grenfell, as he lazily puffed his cigar, while he lay full stretched on the grass. "With what consummate tact, too, the fellow avoided all attempts at fine cookery, and sent us up those trouts plainly fried."

"This is the only thing I cannot relish—this vile, semi-sweet and smoky compound. It is detestable!" And he held the whisky to his nose, and laid it down again. Are we sure that he cannot command something better?"

"Here goes to see," said Grenfell, starting up. "What a crowning pleasure would a glass of sherry—that Amontillado of yours—be in such a spot."

"Fetch me out that map you'll find on my table," said Vyner, as the other moved away, and he lay half dreamily gazing out at the long valley with its mountain barrier in the distance. It was the thought of space, of a splendid territory princely in extent, that captivated his mind with regard to this purchase. All told him that such acquisitions are seldom profitable, and very often perilous; that whatever changes are to be wrought must be carried out with patience and infinite caution, and that the people—the wild natives, who consider the soil as more than half their own—must be conciliated. But was there ever a man—at least an imaginative impulsive man—who did not fancy he was the person to deal with such difficulties? That by his tact and skill, and delicate treatment, the obstacles which had closed the way for others would be removed; that with an instinctive appreciation of the people, of their moods of thought, their passions, and their prejudices, *he* would discover the road to their hearts, and teach them to trust and confide in him?

It was in a sort of fool's paradise of this kind that Vyner lay. He was a prince in his own wild mountain territory, his sway undisputed, his rule absolute. He had spread benefits innumerable around him, and the recipients were happy, and, what is more, were grateful. Some terrible crime—agrarian outrage, as newspaper literature has it—had come before the House, and led to a discussion on the question of Irish landlordism, and he imagined himself rising in his place to declare his own experiences—"very different, indeed, from those of the Right Honourable Gentleman who had just sat down." What a glowing picture of a country he drew; what happiness, what peace, what prosperity. It was Arcadia, with a little more rain, and a police force. There was no disturbance, no scarcity, very little sickness, religious differences were unknown, a universal brotherhood bound man to man, and imparted to the success of each all the sentiment of a general triumph. "And where, sir, will you say, is this happy region in what favoured country blessed by nature is this Elysium? and my reply is, in the wild and almost trackless mountains of Donegal, amidst scenery whose desolate grandeur almost appals the beholder; where but a few years back the traveller dared not penetrate above a mile or two from the coast, and where in comparison the bush in Newfoundland or the thicket in New Zealand had been safe. It is my proud privilege to declare, sir, and this I do, not alone before this House, but in face of the country——"

"That you never saw a prettier face than that," said Grenfell, leading forward the little girl by the hand, and placing her before him.

"She is pretty; she is downright beautiful," said Vyner, warmly. "Where did you find this queen of the fairies?"

"At the well yonder, trying to place on her head a pitcher not much smaller than herself. She tells me she is a stranger here, only waiting for her grandfather to come and fetch her away."

"And where to?" asked Vyner.

"To Glenvallah." And she pointed in the direction of the mountains.

"And where have you come from now?"

"From Arran—from the island."

"What took you to the island, child?"

"I was at my aunt's wake. It was there I got this." And she lifted one of the beads of her necklace with a conscious pride.

"Amber and gold; they become you admirably."

The child seemed to feel the praise in her inmost heart. It was an eulogy that took in what she prized most, and she shook back the luxuriant masses of her hair, the better to display the ornaments she wore.

"And it was your aunt left this to you?" asked Grenfell.

"No; but we had everything amongst us. Grandfather took this, and Tom Noonan took that, and Mark Tracey got the other, and this—this was mine."

"Were you sorry for your aunt?" asked Vyner.

"No, I didn't care."

"Not care for your father's or your mother's sister?"

"She was my mother's sister, but we never saw her. She couldn't come to us, and he wouldn't let us come to her."

"He I suppose, means her husband?"

The child nodded assent.

"And what was the reason of this; was there a family quarrel?"

"No. It was because he was a gentleman."

"Indeed!" broke in Grenfell. "How did you know that?"

"Because he never worked, nor did anything for his living.

He could stay all day out on the sea-shore gathering shells, and go home when he pleased to his meals or his bed."

"And that is being a gentleman?"

"I think it is; and I wish I was a lady."

"What was this gentleman's name?"

"John Hamilton Luttrell—Luttrell of Arran we called him."

"John Luttrell! And was your aunt his wife, child?" asked Vyner, eagerly. "And are you the cousin of Harry Luttrell?"

"Yes; but he would not let me say so; he is as proud as his father."

"He need not be ashamed of such a cousin, I think," said Vyner, as he surveyed her; and the child again raised her fingers to her necklace, as though it was there that lay all her claim to admiration.

"Keep her in talk, George, while I make a sketch of her; she is the very brightest thing I ever saw in nature."

"Tell me the names of all these mountains," said Grenfell; "but first of all, your own."

"My name is Kitty; but I like them to call me Katherine—as the priest does."

"It is statelier to be Katherine," said Grenfell, gravely.

And she gave a nod of haughty acknowledgment that almost provoked a smile from him.

"That mountain is Caub na D'haoul, the Devil's Nightcap; whenever he takes it off, there's a storm at sea; and there's Kilmacreenon, where the Bradleys was killed; and that's Strathmore, where the gold mines is."

"And are there really gold mines there?"

"Ay, if one had leave from the devil to work them; but it was only old Luttrell ever got that, and he paid for it."

"Tell me the story, child; I never heard it."

The girl here seated herself on a knoll directly in front of them, and, with a demure air, and some of that assumed importance she had possibly seen adopted by story-tellers, she began, in a tone and with a fluency that showed she was repeating an oft-told tale:

"There was one of the Luttrells once that was very rich, and a great man every way, but he spent all his money trying to be greater than the King, for whatever the King did, Luttrell would do twice as grand, and for one great feast the King would give, Luttrell would give two, and he came at last to be ruined entirely; and of all his fine houses and lands, nothing was left to him but a little cabin on Strathmore, where his herd used to live. And there he went and lived as poor as a labourin' man; indeed, except that he'd maybe catch a few fish or shoot something, he had nothing but potatoes all the year round. Well, one day, as he was wanderin' about very low and sorrowful, he came to a great cave on the hill-side, with a little well of clear water inside it, and he sat down for the sake of the shelter, and began to think over old times, when he had houses, and horses, and fine clothes and jewels. 'Who'd ever have thought,' says he, 'that it would come to this with me; that I'd be sittin' upon a rock, with nothing to drink but water?' And he took some up in the hollow of his hand and tasted it; but when he finished, he saw there was some fine little grains, like dust, in his hand, and they were bright yellow besides, because they were gold.

"'If I had plenty of you, I'd be happy yet,' says he, looking at the grains.

"'And what's easier in life, Mr. Luttrell?' says a voice; and he starts and turns round, and there, in a cleft of the rock, was sittin' a little dark man, with the brightest eyes that ever was seen, smoking a pipe. 'What's easier in life,' says he, 'Mr. Luttrell?'

"'How do you know my name?' says he.

"'Why wouldn't I?' says the other. 'Sure it isn't because one is a little down in the world that he wouldn't have the right to his own name? I have had some troubles myself,' says he, 'but I don't forget my name for all that.'

"'And what may it be, if it's pleasin' to you?' says Luttrell.

"'Maybe I'll tell it to you,' says he, 'when we're better acquainted.'

"'Maybe I could guess it now,' says Luttrell.

"'Come over and whisper it, then,' says he, 'and I'll tell you if you're right.' And Luttrell did, and the other called out, 'You guessed well; that's just it!'

"'Well,' says Luttrell, 'there's many a change come over me, but the strangest of all is to think that here I am, sittin' up and talking to the——' The other held up his hand to warn him not to say it, and went on: 'And I'm no more afeard of him than if he was an old friend.'

"'And why would you, Mr. Luttrell?—and why wouldn't you think him an old friend? Can you remember one pleasant day in all your life that I wasn't with you some part of it?'"

"Give up that drawing, Vyner, and listen to this," said Grenfell. "I'll make her begin it again for you."

"I am listening. I've heard every word of it," said Vyner. "Go on, dear."

"'I know what you mean well enough,' said Luttrell. 'I know the sort of bargain you make, but what would be the good of all my riches to me when I'd lose my soule?'

"'Isn't it much trouble you take about your soule, Mr. Luttrell?' says he. 'Doesn't it keep you awake at night, thinking how you're to save it? Ain't you always correctin' and chastisin' yourself for the good of your soule, not lettin' yourself drink this or eat that, and warnin' you, besides, about many a thing I won't speak of, eh? Tell me that.'

"'There's something in what you say, no doubt of it,' says Luttrell; 'but, after all,' says he with a wink, 'I'm not going to give it up as a bad job, for all that.'

"'And who asks you?' says the other. 'Do you think that a soule more or less signifies to me? It don't: I've lashins and lavins of them.'

"'Maybe you have,' said Luttrell.

"'Have you any doubt of it, Mr. Luttrell?' says he. 'Will you just mention the name of any one of your friends or family that I can't give you some particulars of?'

"'I'd rather you'd not talk that way,' says Luttrell; 'it makes me feel unpleasant.'

"'I'm sure,' says the other, 'nobody ever said I wasn't polite, or that I ever talked of what was not pleasing to the company.'

"'Well,' says Luttrell, 'supposin' that I wanted to be rich, and supposin' that I wouldn't agree to anything that would injure my soule, and supposin' that there was, maybe, something that you'd like me to do, and that wouldn't hurt me for doin' it; what would that be?'

"'If you always was as cute about a bargain, Mr. Luttrell,' says the other, 'you'd not be the poor man you are to-day.'

"'That's true, perhaps,' says he; 'but you see, the fellows I made them with wasn't as cute as the——'

"'Don't,' says the other, holding up his hand to stop him; 'it's never polite. I told you I didn't want your soul, for I'm never impatient about anything; all I want is to give you a good lesson—something that your family will be long the better of and you want it much, for you have, all of you, one great sin.'

"'We're fond of drink?' says Luttrell.

"'No,' says he; 'I don't mean that.'

"'It's gamblin'?'

"'Nor that.'

"'It's a liking for the ladies?' said Luttrell, slyly.

"'I've nothing to say against that, for they're always well disposed to me,' says he.

"'If it's eatin', or spendin' money, or goin' in debt, or cursin' swearin', or being fond of fightin'——'

"'It is not,' says he; 'them is all natural. It's your pride,' says he—'your upsettin' family pride, that won't let you do this, or say that. There's what's destroyin' you.'

"'It's pretty well out of me now,' says Luttrell, with a sigh.

"'It is not,' says the other. 'If you had a good dinner of beef, and a tumbler of strong punch in you, you'd be as impudent this minute as ever you were.'

"'Maybe you're right,' says Luttrell.

"'I know I am, Mr. Luttrell. You're not the first of your family I was intimate with. You're an ould stock, and I know ye well.'

"'And how are we to be cured?' says Luttrell.

"'Easy enough,' says he. 'When three generations of ye marry peasants, it will take the pride out of your bones, and you'll behave like other people.'

"'We couldn't do it,' says Luttrell.

"'Try,' says the other.

"'Impossible!'

"'So you'd say about livin' on potatoes, and drinkin' well water.'

"'That's true,' says Luttrell.

"'So you'd say about ragged clothes and no shoes to your feet.'

"Luttrell nodded.

"'So you'd say about setting in a cave and talking over family matters to—to a stranger,' says he, with a laugh.

"'I believe there's something in it,' said Luttrell; 'but sure some of us might like to turn bachelors.'

"'Let them, and welcome,' says he. 'I don't want them to do it one after the other. I'm in no hurry. Take a hundred years—take two, if you like, for it.'

"'Done,' says Luttrell. 'When a man shows a fair spirit, I'll always meet him in the same. Give me your hand; it's a bargain.'

"'I hurt my thumb,' says he, 'but take my tail, 'twill do all the same.' And though Mr. Luttrell didn't like it, he shook it stoutly, and only let it go when it began to burn his fingers. And from that day he was rich, even till he died; but after his death nobody ever knew where to find the gold, nor ever will till the devil tells them."

"And did his family keep the bargain; did they marry the peasants?" asked Grenfell.

"Two of them. One before John Luttrell of Arran; and another must do it, and soon too, for they say the two hundred years is near out now."

"And is it said that the remedy succeeded?" asked Vyner; "are the Luttrells cured of their family pride?"

"They can't be till the third marriage takes place; indeed, my grandfather says they'll be worse than ever just before they're cured! 'for,' says he, 'every one that makes a bargain with the devil thinks he has the best of it.'"

"And that, I suspect, is a mistake, Katherine," said Vyner.

She threw down her eyes, and seemed lost in thought, making no reply whatever to his remark.

"I'd have had no dealings with him at all," said Vyner.

"You are rich, and you don't need him," said she, almost fiercely, as though his words had conveyed a sneer.

"That's just it, Kitty," said Grenfell; "or if he did want him it would be for something different from money."

She gave a saucy toss of her head, as though to show she agreed with him, and turned to the table where Vyner was at work with his chalks.

"That's me," said she, gravely.

"I like your own face better," said Vyner.

"So would the little fellow with the pipe that you were telling us of," said Grenfell.

"Let him say so," said she, with a ringing laugh; and she bounded from the spot, and skipping from crag to crag flew down the rock, and hurried down the little path at speed.

"There's a man coming up the road; don't you see him waving his hat?"

"It's an old man," said Vyner, as he looked through his telescope. "I suppose her grandfather."

CHAPTER XII.

THE WALK IN THE MOUNTAINS.

WHEN Vyner went to sleep that night, it was to dream of all that the last few days had presented before him. The wild and rocky Arran, with its ruined Abbey and its lonely occupant; the bright-eyed but over thoughtful looking boy, with all the freshness of childhood and all the contemplative temperament of a man; then the iron-bound shore and the semi-savage natives; and last of all the mountain region where he then was, with that fairy figure more deeply impressed than he had drawn her, and whom he now fancied to be tripping lightly before him up the rocky sides of Strathmore.

As he opened his eyes, the view that met them startled him.

It was one of those vast stretches of landscape which painters cannot convey. They are too wide, too boundless for picture. The plain which lay outstretched before him, rising and falling like a vast prairie, was unmarked by habitation—not a hovel, not a hut to be seen. Vast groups of rocks stood out here and there abruptly, grotesque and strange in outline, as though giants had been petrified in the act of some great conflict, the stunted trees that crowned the summits serving as feathers on the helmets. A great amphitheatre of mountain girded the plain, save at one spot, the Gap of Glenvallah, through which, as his map told him, his road on that morning lay.

His object was to see with his own eye the so much vaunted scenery of this region, to visit the lonely spot, and talk himself with its wild natives; he doubted, indeed, if both the solemnity and the savagery had not been exaggerated. To acquire the property was, after all, only one of those caprices which rich men can afford themselves. They can buy some rare and costly relic—some curious manuscript, some singular specimen of a contested species, a shell, a stone, a fragment of sculptured marble —to show which once or twice to some critical eye is all its value; why not then possess in nature what, had it been reduced to art and signed Poussin or Salvator, would have been priceless? It was thus he reasoned: "If this place be but what they have described it, I shall own a landscape that all the galleries of Europe cannot rival. A landscape, too, whose varying effects of sun and shadow, of daybreak and twilight, shall be endless. The greatest of all painters, the sun, shall throw over the scene his own lights, and the storm shall wash the canvas and bring out afresh all the most lovely tints of colour."

Grenfell had promised him overnight to be up and stirring by an early hour, but when called he refused to rise; he had his lazy fit on him, he said; he might have called it rather a malady than a paroxysm, for it was chronic. He declared that the view from the rock before the door fully satisfied him; he was no glutton about scenery; a little did for him, and here was a feast. "Besides," said he, "I have been reading those atrocious magazines all night, and I mean to devote my day to some rebel colloquies with my host."

Perhaps after all, Vyner was scarcely sorry to set out alone; Grenfell's companionship was of so essentially worldly a character, his qualities were best exercised when they discussed the men, the things, and the topics of his day: such a man saw in the wild sublimity of a mountain scene little else than its desolation, and Vyner bethought him how often this town-bred gentleman had jarred upon him in moments of peaceful reverie and errant fancy.

O'Rorke served his breakfast in silence; either he was not in communicative mood, or he mistrusted his guest. He answered with brevity the few questions about the road, only adding "that it was a pity the gentleman had not mentioned before where he was going, for there was an old man and his granddaughter had just set out on that very road."

"The child I saw here yesterday?"

"The same."

"Have they been long gone? Could I overtake them, think you?"

"Easy enough; they've taken some bread and a bottle of milk for their breakfast, and you'll come up with them, if you walk briskly, before they reach the Gap."

He lost no further time, but strapping on a light knapsack, and armed with a stout stick, set out at once.

"If it's a gauger you are, you'd wish yourself back in the place you came from before night," said O'Rorke as he looked after him. Vyner was a good walker, and trained to the mountains, so that his eye quickly detected any available short cut, and enabled him at a glance to choose his path. If there was not actual peril in his position—thus alone and companionless in a wild region, where any suspicion may attach to the stranger—there was that amount of adventure that summons a man's courage to its post, and tells him that he must look to his own safety; and who that has felt this sensation, this proud sense of self-dependence, does not know its ecstasy! Who has not tasted the small heroism of being alone on the mountain, on the wild heath at midnight, on the rolling sea with a gathering storm in the distance, and who, having felt, has not gloried in it?

But to the man who leaves behind a home of every comfort, where all that can adorn and embellish existence are to be found, the contrast of present privation with past indulgence has something wonderfully exciting. He pictures the present drawing-room with its cheerful fire, and the happy faces around the hearth; he fancies he hears the merry laugh, the melodious chords of the piano, the swell of some sweet voice, and then he bends his ear to the rugged plash of the breaking sea, or the whistling wind as it sweeps through some Alpine "crevasse." If no sense of such dangers arose to Vyner's mind, yet there was enough to make him feel how different was his present position from anything that his daily life exacted. The chances that we voluntarily confront have a wondrous fascination.

From his map he learned that the estate which he wished to purchase began at the Gap of Inchegora, a solemn gorge visible for many a mile off! It was indeed a grand portal that same Gap, not fully fifty feet in width, and more than nine hundred in height—a mere fissure, in fact, as complete as though made by the stroke of a giant's scimitar. With his eyes directed constantly to this spot, he went onward, and came at length to a little stream, at the margin of which, and under the shelter of a solitary ash, sat the old peasant and his granddaughter at their breakfast.

"I have walked hard to come up with you," said Vyner. "I wanted to have your company to the Gap." The old man touched his hat in acknowledgment of this speech, and then bent down his head, while the child spoke to him in Irish.

"'Tis deaf my grandfather is, sir, and he didn't hear you," said the girl.

"Tell him I would be glad if he'd be my guide as far as Mort-na——"

She laughed merrily at his poor attempt at the name, and said, with a racy intonation,—

"Mortnagheela. 'Tis there we live ourselves."

The old peasant munched his bread and lifted the bottle twice to his lips before he answered the girl's question, and then said,

"Ask him is he a gauger."

"No," said Vyner, laughing; "I have not come here to molest any one. I want nothing more than to look at your big mountains and grand old cliffs."

"You're a surveyor," said the old man, whose hearing seemed to have not lost one word Vyner uttered.

"Not even that, my good friend—a mere idler, no more."

The peasant said something in Irish to the child, and she laughed heartily at it, looking up the while in Vyner's face, as though it made the jest more poignant.

"Well, will you let me bear you company, Katherine?" asked he.

As the girl repeated the question, the old fellow gave a half-impatient shrug of the shoulders, and uttered a few sentences in Irish with a voluble energy that savoured of passion.

"'Tis what he says, sir," said the child; "that he was in trouble once before, and found it hard enough to get out of it, and if misfortune was to come to you, that he'd be blamed for it."

"So, then, he'd rather have nothing to do with me," said Vyner, smiling. "What does he mean by trouble?"

The old man looked up full in his face, and his eyes took an almost defiant expression as he said,—

"Isn't the assizes trouble?—isn't it trouble to be four months in gaol waiting for them?—isn't it trouble to stand up in the dock, with two sons of your own, and be tried for your life?"

"Yes, that indeed may be called trouble," said Vyner, compassionately, as he sat down on the bank and took out a cigar. "Do you smoke? Will you have one of these?"

The old man looked at the cigar and shook his head; either he did not value, or did not understand it.

"That's the reason I come up here," resumed the peasant. "I'm a Mayo man, and so is all belongin' to me, but after that"—he laid an emphasis on the last word—"the landlord, ould Tom Luttrell, wouldn't renew my lease, and so I come up to this wild place, where, praise be to the Virgin, there's no leases nor landlords either."

"How does that happen? The land surely has an owner?"

"If it has, I never saw him, nor *you* neither. And whoever he is, he knows better than to come here and ax for his rents." The bitter laugh with which the old fellow finished his speech was scarcely short of an insult—indeed Vyner half winced as he felt that it might have been meant as a menace to himself. "No," continued he, as though following out the flow of his own thoughts; "there's the Gap of Inchegora before us, and through that Gap tithe-proctor, agent, or bailiff never passed, and if they did, they'd never pass back again!"

"And who is supposed to own these lands?" asked Vyner, mildly.

"The College of Dublin has some of them; Lord Landsborough has more; John Luttrell of Arran says that there's part of them his; and, for the matter of that, I might say that the mountain there was mine—and who's to contradict me?—or what better am I after saying it?"

Pouring out a cupful of brandy from his flask, Vyner offered it to him, and this he took with gratitude, his eyes devouring with admiration the little silver goblet that held it.

"Drink Mr. Luttrell's health," said Vyner, pouring out the last of the liquor into the cup; "he was an old friend of mine long ago."

"Here's health to him, and long life too, if it was any use to him," said the man, doggedly.

"There is truth in what you mean; a life such as he leads now can be of little pleasure, or profit either."

"And who brought him to it?" burst in the old man, fiercely, for the spirit had mounted to his brain, maddening and exciting him. "What was it but the old Luttrell pride that ruined every one of them, and will ruin them yet? He married a decent girl, well brought up, and good-looking; she wasn't a lady, but not a lady in the land had a better heart or a finer temper, but he wouldn't own her for all that. No, not a bit of it; there she lived, now with one brother, now with another, nobody darin' to call her Mrs. Luttrell, nor even as much as hint she was married. How we stood it—we never were very patient—I don't know, but we did, and more ill luck to us for doing so!" There was a long pause before he continued: "At last there came that trouble I was telling you of. When Mr. Crowe was shot, and I was tuk with my two sons, as innocent every one of us as that little girl there, but what did that signify?—the Attorney-General said, 'It's eight-and-twenty years I'm coming this circuit, and I never knew a capital felony to be tried without a Malone in it! I wonder,' says he 'will the time ever come when this will cease?' There was eight of us then banished, some in Botany Bay, and some in America, and, by coorse, it was hard for us to make up money for the 'defence'—the more because we spent so much already on lawyers. Howsomever, we did do it. We got a pound here, and ten shillings there, and at last gathered twenty-two fourteen-six. I'll never forget it, twenty-two fourteen-six—in fact, I used to go on saying it over to myself, as I sat in my cell, just as if saying it would make it grow. The attorney, Mr. Roach, who was a good friend of ours, towld me in secret that there was two or three ugly things in the case, and that short of ould Mr. Clancy, the King's Counsel, there warn't a man could get us off; 'and less than thirty guineas,' says he, 'won't bring him down.' All this time none of us would ask Sally Luttrell for a farthin'. We all knew she had nothing of her own, and we wouldn't be beholdin' to Mr. Luttrell. At last, my youngest daughter couldn't bear it any longer; she sets off for the house where Sally was stoppin', and what she said, or how she did it, we never knew, but the next morning there came to Mr. Roach's office a note with the money. It was an order on French's Bank, signed with a letter L. When the trial was come on—it was the third day—the Crown lawyers were pushing hard to make out a charge of conspiracy, and show that half the country was in it, and at last declared that they were ready to prove that an immense sum of money lay in the Bank just to defend all the people that ever broke the law, or did anything wrong, and that in this case they would produce a list of subscribers, each of them down for some trifle, every one of whom had been once at least in that dock with an indictment against him. Sure enough, however he come by it, he had the list. And such a set of witnesses as he brought up never was seen afore. 'Gentlemen of the jury, I only ask you to look at them,' says he; 'just look at them, and you'll know what sort of a tie binds these people to the prisoners in the dock.' Clancy said nothing till it was all over—he wouldn't cross-question one—but he holds a bit of paper in his hand, and says, 'My Lord,' says he, 'it appears to me that to be poor and wear ragged clothes in this country is to be outlawed, and that any man whose condition is not as comfortable as my learned friend's, must be declared a rebel to his King and a liar to his Maker. It's very hard,' says he, 'but as it comes from so high an authority as the Attorney-General, it must be good law, and I'll not dispute it. Fortunately, however, for my unhappy client, his character has not only made friends for him amongst good men and kind men—it is only by his equals in life that his honest nature is known—poor labourers, humble peasants testify by their hard-earned pittance, freely given, to their love for an old neighbour and friend. But what good is it? They are poor, and must be perjured; they are half-famished, and of course they are infamous. But here, my Lord, is a witness well enough to do to be respected; he eats, drinks, and dresses in the way the law requires; he has an estate, and of course a conscience; he keeps an agent, and therefore he has a sowl to be saved; his sympathies are written down here at the cost of eleven pounds eight shillings, and—though his modesty is satisfied with a mere letter L—his name is John Hamilton Luttrell.'"

As if the strain on his memory to recall the precise words employed, and to bring back the whole scene, had been too much for him, or as though the emotions of the past had surged back to overwhelm him, the old peasant held his hand over his eyes, and sat several minutes without speaking.

"Did Luttrell come on the table, then?" asked Vyner.

"No, sir; he was seen in court a short time before, but when he was called he couldn't be found; nor from that day out was he ever seen in the streets of Castlebar. It was that sent him away to the island. His pride and his shame together."

"You are less than just to my old friend," said Vyner, warmly. "To know what he felt, to understand all the difficulties that he saw before him, you should be in *his* place as he was."

"That's as much as to say that I ought to be a gentleman before I condemned him," said the old fellow, with a look of intense craftiness. "But the lawyer that defended *me* didn't want to be a labourin' man to explain what *I* felt, or what was passin' in my heart. No, sir, there's things in the world that are just the same to the rich man as to the poor one, just as sickness and sorrow is. Get up, Kitty, we're stayin' too long here: it will be black night before we get home."

"How many miles do you count it?"

"Twenty-one—long miles, too—the last four of them over shingle, and steep besides."

"Shall I find an inn—well, shall I find shelter for the night?" said he, correcting himself.

"Shelter I could give you myself, but I'd rather you'd look for it anywhere else. I told you already why."

"Well, I'm not afraid of your company, and, if you don't dislike mine, we'll travel together."

The litttle girl said something with eagerness in Irish, and then turning to Vyner she took his hand, and said, "Yes, come with us." And they set out.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROJECT.

It was on the evening of the second day after Vyner's departure, that Grenfell, never much given to anxieties about others, felt a certain uneasiness, and sauntered down the glen, wondering what might have detained him. He had not gone fully a mile, when he saw in the grey twilight a man approaching; he hailed, and was answered in his friend's voice, "All right; it is I."

"I was going to start the hue and cry, or whatever may represent that institution here, after you, Vyner. Where have you been all this time?"

"As to the where, my friend, it would require a very different tongue from yours and mine to say; Russian and Polish names are nothing in comparison. As to the how I have been, is easier to answer—never better; though with all due gratitude be it said, I have passed my time in rather questionable company."

"At least they recognized the rights of hospitality?"

"Arabs themselves were never more punctilious. My host was the grandfather of our little friend the fairy queen, a man of nigh eighty, who had been tried on two capital charges, and ought, I suspect, to have been convicted on both. His friends, to the number of twenty odd, were all Whiteboys, Ribbonmen, or whatever other name includes law-breakers of the first magnitude; and one, as handsome and frank-featured a young fellow as ever you saw, who accompanied me to the lake side this evening, had made his escape from Castlebar gaol when under sentence of death, and actually went back to the town to witness the execution of his cousins on the following Saturday, it being, as he said, the only mark of affection he was able to show them."

"I make you my compliment, as the French say, on your company. And the women, what were they like?"

"I saw but two, an old hag that was brought down special to give an opinion upon me from external traits, and pronounce whether I had the colour of hair or eyes that indicated a tendency to bear witness against my neighbour; the other was a sickly creature, bedridden though in the prime of life, mother of little Katherine."

"But explain how you could have prolonged your stay amongst such people. What were you doing? what were you saying?"

"Doing? The whole day we walked the mountains. They led me, by paths known only to themselves, over an immense mountain district, showing me all that was noteworthy, and pointing out effects of scenery and picturesque spots with a feeling and taste that amazed me. They used no cant of art, none of that tricky phraseology, it is true, which we accept as the vernacular of all landscape description; but in their wild imagery and reckless imagination they gave names to the places which showed how deeply objects of terror or beauty had appealed to them. Then at nightfall we gathered close to the turf fire and the potato 'kish,' a wide, open basket, which served as strainer and dish together. There we supped, talked politics, religion, law, and a little literature—at least so far as the Life of Freeny and the story of Moll Flanders enter into biographical letters."

"How I should like to have drawn a cordon of policemen round the party and netted the whole."

"You might like to have planned the campaign, but I'll be sworn if you had been favoured with a look at the company you'd never have led the expedition."

"What a traveller's knack it is to exaggerate the war-paint of one's Indian friends," said Grenfell, superciliously. "But here we are with our supper waiting for us, and even Mr. O'Rorke's noble feast, will contrast favourably with your host's."

The meal ended, they seated themselves on the door-sill, looking out into the still and starry night, and resumed the theme they were discussing.

"I take it that you said you were a mere tourist rambling for pleasure?" asked Grenfell.

"No, I told them I had come down to see the country with some intentions to make a purchase. It was not so easy to explain that I was more eager to acquire a very beautiful and picturesque tract than a remunerative one, but they believed me at last—that is, they gave credit to my sincerity at the cost of my shrewdness." Grenfell nodded, as though he agreed with them, and Vyner went on: "We were a full house when I made my declaration—there were, I should say, six or seven-and-twenty present—and they concurred in applauding the frankness with which I spoke to them. A very old man, a venerable figure, whose high forehead and white beard would have impressed me, perhaps, more reverentially if I had not been told that he had been flogged by John Beresford, in the year '98, for some cruel outrage he had committed—this apart —he, however, complimented me highly on my straightforwardness, and said that if others would do like me there would be fewer disturbances about land; and the illustration he used was this: 'If you go into a fair to buy a horse, and you see a splendid animal, strong-boned, well-ribbed, and powerful, with every promise of speed and strength; you are as well satisfied with his price as with his perfections, but do your inquiries stop there?—not a bit of it. You know well that he may be a capital hunter and a noble roadster, but you want to learn what his temper is. All his fine qualities depend upon this, for if he be unruly and unmanageable, to what purpose is his power or his activity? It is precisely the same with a property . you may have wood and water, arable land and lay, mines and meadows, and, with all these there may be a "temper" that renders them worthless. Landlords won't believe this; buyers won't listen to it. They say, "Make out my title clear and clean, and leave me to deal with it." Men with money in the bank, and who, because they can live anywhere, are chained to nowhere, cannot understand the love of a poor labouring man to some mud-hovel or some shealing, to a brook where he has paddled in boyhood, to the mountain that he has seen from his earliest infancy. They do not, cannot, perceive why poverty should sharpen any susceptibilities—poverty, that can blunt so many—and they say, "Turn him out. I'll find a place for him elsewhere." But that's a mistake; you might as well say you'd replace the child he has followed to the churchyard. The man, in the very proportion of his destitution, has bound up his heart with some half-dozen little objects that have, from time and long usage, grown to be part of him. The monotony that wearies the rich man is the luxury of the poor. To live where their fathers lived, to see an unchanged world around them, to have few contrasts of the present with the past is their paradise——'"

"Where did you get all this?" broke in Grenfell. "From your friend of the cat-o'-nine-tails?"

"Exactly. The words of wisdom were all his own, and, unlike the fate of most wisdom, it was listened to. He showed me, in fact, that though the Law might give possession, it would not ensure me one of the rights of property; I might own, but not enjoy; I might have and hold, but neither sow nor reap; I might walk over, and shoot over, but with no privilege to keep any other from doing the same, and that before I thought of preserving the game, I should take some measures about preserving myself. The man who enunciated these principles—for they were principles— declared them calmly and dispassionately, not as sentiments that conveyed anger or passion; far from it—he felt all the dignity of a sage instructing ignorance. He was a great Saquem, delivering the laws of his tribe, and showing what had been their guides and directors for centuries. I did, indeed, once, only once, venture upon a mild remonstrance, that there were some things which a landlord possessed for the betterment of those under him; that he might assist them in many ways, and be the means of their advancement and prosperity; but he demurred to this, and so did his followers. Their experience, they said, did not confirm this; as a class they had found landlords narrow-minded and selfish, very ignorant of the people, and very indifferent to them. They opined that, as an institution, landlordism had not succeeded, and half hinted that it was a Saxon innovation that was brought over in days of violence and oppression, and did not suit the conditions of the country at present."

"And you listened to these rascals coolly propounding such doctrines?"

"Yes; and so would you have done too, had you have been in my place, my dear George! A minority is never very truculent when the majority could pitch it over a cliff without the slightest risk of being called to account for it."

"It would have pushed my patience hard, though."

"It would have been your prudence, and not your patience, that you'd have consulted."

"Well, I'll not quarrel with the rogues if they have disabused you as to the pleasures of Irish proprietorship; they've done you a good service, but I must say, I think their case a more hopeless one, now that I see lawlessness is a system."

"I don't think you would if you talked with them! They were too argumentative not to be open to conviction; too logical, with all their prejudices, not to be approachable by reason. I was, all the time we were talking, so impressed with this, that I could not help imagining what a race so quick-sighted and intelligent might become when educated and instructed. Take my word for it, George, Hodge will have no chance against Paddy if he ever get book-learning."

A mocking laugh was Grenfell's answer.

"So satisfied am I of the truth of what I say, that I'm going to give a proof of it."

"What, going to set up a school in the wilds of Donegal!"

"No. I'm going to carry away that pretty child, and educate her with Ada."

"You'll not do anything so foolish I trust!"

"It is all settled, the conditions arranged, the terms agreed to. I have given her grandfather ten pounds for her outfit, some few things she needed, and as much more to pay their journey over to Wales, for the old fellow, with a caution that was creditable to him, wished to see the ladies to whom his child was to be confided, and confer a little with them besides."

"All your scheme for the property was absolute wisdom compared with this!"

"How so?"

"Where everything is so absurd one cannot decide what to ridicule. Suppose you succeed—and it is what I by no means grant—what will you do with her? You'll give her the tastes, the accomplishments, and the habits of a lady—to marry her to your gamekeeper or your gardener. You'll turn her brain with ten years of luxury—to make the whole of her after life a dreary servitude. You'll excite ambition, whose very least evil will be bitter disappointment; and for what? To gratify a caprice, to paint the moral of a vapid theory about Irish intelligence. No, no, Vyner, don't make such a blunder as this, and a serious blunder, too; for, amongst other pleasant contingencies, Paddy MacHackaway is sure to call you to account some fine day; why you dared to do this, or omitted to do that; and with all your respect for his reasoning qualities, he sometimes expresses his sentiments with a bludgeon."

"The thing is done, George, if you were to rail at it for a week. It is done, and cannot be undone, even if I wished it."

"But why not? What is easier than to send for this old rascal who has so over-blarneyed you, and compromise the matter? A couple more of those crisp ten-pounders that I must say you displayed before these creatures with an unpardonable rashness——"

"Be it so," broke in Vyner. "But let me tell you that they saw my pocket-book full of them; they saw on the window-seat, where by chance I had left it, a purse heavy with gold, and yet these poor fellows were proof against the temptations; and it was the gaol-breaker himself who carried my knapsack on my way back, which contained, as he knew, both purse and pocket-book; so that against their honesty I'll not listen to a word."

"Let them have all the virtues under the sun if you will; call them all Arcadians. All I ask is that we should have no dealings with them. Send off O'Rorke; let him bring this old fellow before me, and I'll answer for it that I settle the question at once."

"No, no; my word is pledged, and I'll not break it."

"I don't ask you to break it. What I propose is, that you should be released from a very ill-judged contract, certain to turn out ill to all it includes. Let me at least try if what I suggest is not practicable."

"If the negotiation were to be carried on with men of your own rank and condition, Grenfell, there is not any one to whom I would with more confidence confide it; but forgive me if I say that you're not the man to deal with these people."

"Why not?"

"For a number of reasons. First of all, you are strongly prejudiced against them; you are disposed to regard them as something little better than savages——"

"Pardon me, there you are wrong—as not one whit better."

"That's enough, then; you shall be no envoy to them from me."

"Well, I'll knock under; I'll agree to your high estimate of them, intellectually and morally, only with that detractive element of poverty which makes even clever men submissive, and occasionally squeezes conscience into a compromise. You tell me they are very amenable to reason; let me see if I agree with you. You assure me that with all their seeming impulsiveness and headlong rashness they are eminently calculating and forecasting. I want to see this. Bethink you what a grand witness I shall be to the truth of your theory when I am converted. Come, consent to send for this old fellow; make any pretext you please for seeing him, so that I may have a quarter of an hour's talk with him."

"To what end? You could scarcely address to him the arguments you have just used to me——"

"Leave that to my discretion. I suspect, Vyner—mind, it is mere suspicion—but I suspect that your Celtic friend will be far more practical and business-like in his dealings with me than with you, that his shrewdness will show him that I am a common-place man of the world, not caring, nor indeed believing, in any great regeneration for Ireland, and that all our intercourse must take the shape of a bargain."

"I consent," said Vyner; "but, I own, less from choice than necessity, for time presses, and I find by a note I have just received that M'Kinlay, my man of business, has arrived at Westport, and whatever we decide on must be done at once."

"If I'm not very much mistaken, Vyner, my negotiation will not take ten minutes, and perhaps as many pounds, so that you may order whatever it be that is to carry us hence, and I'll guarantee to be ready."

While Vyner hastened to give the necessary orders, Grenfell opened his writing-desk, from which he took some bank-notes and gold, and thrust them together in his pocket.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DISCUSSION.

"WHEN that old man comes," said Grenfell—"Malone, I think is the name—let him come in here. I want to speak to him."

"He's outside now, before the door," said O'Rorke, whose prying looks showed how eager he felt to know what might be the subject of their conversation.

"Does he hold any land in this neighbourhood?"

"He's like the rest," replied the other, half sullenly; "he lives where he can, and how he can."

"What you would call a squatter?" said the Englishman, who smiled at his own sharpness in employing the word.

"What I wouldn't call any such thing," replied O'Rorke, firmly; "no more than I'd say it was squatting to sit down on my own hearthstone."

"Which, perhaps, wouldn't be your own, my good friend, if you were merely a tenant, and not a solvent one."

"You may talk that way up in Leinster, or some of the counties that border on Leinster; but I tell you that you know mighty little of Ireland if you think that what your newspapers call the 'GREAT name of ENGLAND' terrifies any one down here. Just try it. It's about fifty miles from this to the Land's End, and I'll give you all that distance to find ten, no, but five men, that you'll frighten by the threat of British law or British vengeance—which is about the same thing."

"I'm sorry to hear it; that is to say, I should be sorry it was true."

"Well, if you mean to deny, why don't you prove it? What's easier than to tell the carman we're not going to Westport, we're going up through Donegal to count the people that's in love with the British rule in Ireland! You shake your head. I don't wonder, indeed; no shame to you, that you wouldn't like the journey. But I'll tell you what you can do instead of it," said he, with a firm and steady voice.

"What's that?"

"Leave sixpence here, in my hands, and it will treat every well-wisher of England from this to the Giant's Causeway Isn't that a fine investment for you?"

Grenfell's face flushed, his brow darkened, and he turned to hurl a stern reproof to this insolence; but he saw in the elated look of the other all the delight of one who was gradually drawing an adversary into the lists, and to a combat in which practice had given him a certain dexterity.

Determined, at all events, to foil this design, the Englishman affected indifference, looked at his watch, turned over some papers that lay on the table, and then carelessly said, "Send in Malone here."

With the dogged air of one disappointed and baffled in his designs, O'Rorke left the room, and soon after the old man entered, stroking down his white hair as he came forward, and making his reverences with a strange mixture of servility and defiance.

"Your name is Malone?" said Grenfell.

"Peter Malone, sir."

"Come nearer, Malone. I have heard a good deal about you from my friend, whom you treated so hospitably up in the mountains, and he has also spoken to me of a sort of plan—I won't call it a very wise one—that he struck out the other night, and which, it appears you agreed to, about your granddaughter." He paused, hoping that the peasant would speak, but the old man simply bent his two dark and piercing eyes on him and nodded. Grenfell went on: "I have pointed out to him some, though very far from all, of the inconveniences of the scheme, and I have asked his leave to point them out to you, and from what he has told me of your good sense and clear-headedness, I suspect I shall not have undertaken my task in vain."

"Does he mean that he wants to go back of it?" asked Malone, with a calm and resolute look.

"Listen to me patiently, and you shall hear all." It is not necessary I should weary my reader with a sermon where the text conveys so much. The chief burden of Grenfell's argument was what he had addressed to Vyner; and upon this he expanded freely, laying much stress on the misfortune that must accrue to any young girl raised to a temporary elevation, from which she must come down to meet a life of perhaps privation and hardship. He pictured an existence of luxury on the one hand, and of poverty on the other, and asked what right had any one to expose another to such extremes—what preparation could ease and indulgence be to a life of toil and suffering? "How were the acquirements of the one to be made applicable to the other?—how," he asked, "is the young lady—for she will have become a young lady—to change at once to the condition of the ill-fed, ill-dressed, hard-worked country girl?"

Had the orator only glanced as he spoke at the features of the listener, he would have seen what a lamentable blunder his rhetoric had made. At the mention of the words "young lady," the whole expression of the old man's face altered; his half-sullen obduracy, his rugged sternness disappeared, his eyes lighted up, his lips parted, his nostrils dilated, and his whole face beamed with joy that was positively triumphant. "Go on, sir!—go on!" he cried, as though he yearned for a perfect picture of what imagination had but sketched an outline.

"You cannot mean, my good man," said Grenfell, hastily, "that you would think it any benefit to be placed where you couldn't remain?—to stand at a height where you couldn't balance yourself? It's not enough that people can dress well, and talk well, and look well; they must have, besides, the means to do all these, day after day, without an effort, without as much as a care or a thought about them. Do you understand me?"

"Sure, people wasn't born ladies and gentlemen from the beginnin' of the world?"

"No; great families took their rise in great actions. Some by courage, some by cleverness, some by skill, and some by great industry."

"Just so!" broke in the old man. "There was always some one to begin it, and likely enough too in a mighty small way. Dare I ax your honour a question?"

"Ask freely, my good fellow."

"Though I suppose your honour will have to go back very far, can you tell me what was the first of your own great family?"

From the purpose-like energy of the old peasant's manner, and the steady and penetrating look of his bright eyes, Grenfell felt certain that the man had been prompted to put this insult upon him, and in a voice broken by passion, he said,—

"You'll gain very little by insolence, old man! With my family you have nothing to do; they were in no wise connected with yours."

"Be gorra! I knew it," cried the peasant, slapping his thigh with his hand. "I'd have taken my oath of it. I was as sure of it as I was of my skin that you were not a born gentleman. You may be as rich as you please, and have houses, and lands, and cows, and horses, but there's not a dhrop of the real blood in your body! I said it the first minute I looked at you, and I say it again."

Pale and quivering with anger, Grenfell could not utter a word. The savage violence of the peasant came on him so much by surprise, that he was actually overwhelmed by it; and though he darted on the old fellow a look of fury, he turned away without speaking, and entered the house.

Vyner had just received tidings that Mr. M'Kinlay had arrived at Westport to await his instructions, and he was writing a hurried line to despatch by the messenger, to say that he would return there on the morrow, when Grenfell entered, and threw himself into a chair.

"I have met with ruffianism in most shapes, Vyner," cried he, "but so insolent a scoundrel as that yonder never came across me before."

"Insolent! Is it possible? What pretext could he have for insolence?"

"I know well, with your infatuation for these people, what a hopeless task it would be to persuade you that they were not miracles of good manners, as well of loyalty and good conduct. I am quite prepared to hear that I mistook, or misunderstood—that, in short, what I fancied was insult was Irish *naïveté*."

"But tell me what passed between you; what he said."

"I will not."

"Will you not let me judge of what you accuse him?"

"I will not; nay, more, I make it a charge upon you, as you desire our friendship to continue, that not only you never interrogate me on this matter, but that you neither question nor permit that man to be questioned upon it. Such a fellow should have as small a place in one's memory as in one's esteem, and I'd rather forget him."

"Tell me, at least, what have you done in the negotiation?"

"Nothing. He opines that you have given him a pledge, to which as a gentleman you are bound, and as he sees neither peril nor inconvenience to result from converting a peasant child into a mock young lady, I suppose you have no choice, but must carry out your fine project with all the success it deserves."

"I wish you would let me know what passed between you. If there was any intentional offence I'd certainly not overlook it."

"I'll tell you nothing."

"Shall he ask your pardon?"

"He may; but he shall never have it."

"You are provoking, George, I must say. You are not just to either of us; for certainly if I were convinced that you were aggrieved to the extent you suppose——"

"I tell you once again, and for the last time, I will not discuss it; and as you have promised me not to open the matter with this fellow, it may be forgotten at once."

"You really wish it?"

"I insist upon it."

"That is sufficient." Vyner took out his pocket-book, and walked to the door. "Malone," cried he; and the old man came forward bareheaded and respectful, without a shade of passion on his face. "Malone, I am not so fully assured as I felt last night when I first proposed it, that my plan for your grandchild would be a wise one; at least, reflection has shown me some difficulties about it——"

"Just tell me, sir, do you want to draw back?" said the old man, resolutely, but respectfully.

"It would be better that you heard me out," said Vyner, severely. "I am willing to do all that I offered——"

"That will do, sir. I never doubted the word of a real gentleman."

"I was going to say, that if, instead of taking your child from you, you preferred that I should settle a certain sum of money on her, to be her marriage portion——"

"No, sir; no, sir. What you offered or nothing. Make her a lady, as you said you would, or leave her where she is."

"I think my good man, you suffer your hot blood to get the better of your judgment occasionally, and it would be as well if you would give yourself some more time for reflection."

"My blood is just as God gave it to me, neither hotter nor colder; and what I say now, I'd say to-morrow. Keep your word, or break it, whichever you plaze!"

"I can very well understand how my friend——" Vyner stopped himself in time, and, after a second's pause, proceeded: "You hold me, then, to my bargain?"

"How can I hould you? You may hould yourself, but *I* can't hould you!"

Vyner's cheek flushed, partly with anger, partly with shame, and he said, "With this you will buy what clothes your grandchild will require at present. Do not spend more of it than you like, for these things shall be looked to by others; and this will pay the cost of your journey. I have written down the way you are to go, and also the name and place of my house. My present intention is to be at home within a fortnight; but if you arrive before that, you will be equally welcome."

"Very well, sir," said the old man, as he deposited the banknotes in a leather purse. "I may go now?"

"Yes, you may go. Remember, however, Malone, that if between this and next Thursday week, you are inclined to think that my last offer is a better one——"

"No fear of that, your honour!" broke in the old man with a laugh. "I'm a poor man and an ignorant man, but I know what's best for the stock I came from. It isn't money we want. It's the place where we can make money, and more than money;" and with a jerk of his frieze coat over his shoulder, the old fellow strode away down the valley.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. M'KINLAY'S MISSION.

WHEN Mr. M'Kinlay set out from the cottage in Wales, it was in no especial good humour towards Miss Courtenay. She had what is vulgarly called "snubbed him," and this is a process uncommonly painful to a well-to-do middle-aged gentleman, accustomed to a great deal of daily respect, and not a little looked up to in his peculiar sphere.

All night long, as he travelled, he pondered over these things, his irritation growing ever deeper. He recalled every word she had said, and in his anger even imitated to himself the careless impertinence of her tone as she said, "And are *you* going yachting?" just as if such a thought was too absurd to be entertained. "And why not, I'd like to know? Is there anything in my status or position that would make a pleasure excursion ridiculous in a man like me? I could afford it. I hope she doesn't imply I'm too old for it. Age is an ugly subject; she'd better not cross-examine her witnesses there. And my red tapery! What a blessing it was there were creatures to docket, and tie up, and register, and save superior souls the trouble of remembering anything! And then her last impertinence, when, after a sneer at Irish property, she said she wished I had one! I'm much mistaken, madam," cried he, half aloud, "if a little of that same secluded savagery that Ireland affords wouldn't do you a world of good—if a couple of years of country life, with a bog landscape and a rainy sky, wouldn't prove an admirable alterative to you! No fine acquaintances, none of those pleasant idlers, who like to run down for a week to the country, and bring all the gossip of town along with them, will follow you to Ireland. No fealty, no affection will cross the Channel, and traverse that dreary waste of morass, dotted with mud-hovels, they call in irony the Green Isle. If anything could bring you to your senses, madam, it would be a residence here."

Such were Mr. M'Kinlay's thoughts as the mail lumbered heavily along through the deeply-rutted roads, and the rain swooped down in torrents. "I should like to see her yonder," muttered he, as they passed a dreary two-storied house that stood alone on the bleak moor they call the Curragh. "That's the reformatory I should like to try you with!"

With such benevolent intentions as these did he arrive at Carrick's Royal Hotel, in Westport, just as Vyner and Grenfell had reached the same spot.

"You've had an uncomfortable journey of it, I fear, Mr. M'Kinlay," said Vyner, as he shook him cordially by the hand. "Nothing but wind and rain for the last three days. Come into my room here, I want to speak to you before you meet any one. I don't think you know Grenfell," said he, when they were alone, "and I should like to prepare you a little for a man who, with unquestionable abilities, has a number of oddities about him, and has a most intense pleasure in contradiction. This has been especially called out by a project of mine, which, perhaps, you will not fully approve, but, at all events, will accept as a pardonable caprice."

With this prelude he related his plan about the little girl whom he destined to make a companion for Ada. He told how he had been struck by her wonderful beauty, but far more by the signs of remarkable intelligence she displayed, and the traits of decision and firmness so rare in a creature of her age. He urged the advantage it would be to Ada, whose fault was an excess of timidity, to see one of her own age so bold and fearless. "That intrepid spirit, trained to independence, will certainly impart some of its nature to my timid and gentle girl," said he, "and the companionship will as certainly dispel the tendency to depression which is the besetting sin of my dear child."

"Do you mean to adopt her?" asked the lawyer.

"No, not adopt her. I mean to educate her, and bring her up with Ada, portion her when she is married, or make some provision for her if she lives single."

"That is to say, you want some eight or ten years of her life, and are not overburdened with anxiety as to what comes of her after."

"Grenfell himself couldn't have judged me more unfairly, M'Kinlay. I want to deal honourably and liberally by her, and I want you to counsel me how to do so."

"Make a settlement on her, fix upon a sum, appoint trustees, and arrange that on her coming to a certain age she shall be declared in the enjoyment of it."

"I am quite willing; nay, more, I'll leave the entire matter in your hands. You shall decide on the amount—yes, I insist upon it—and shall make all the other arrangements. I don't think there will be much more to detain us here, for I am not so eager about this property as I was some weeks ago."

"Have you been over it?"

"Yes, and am delighted with its picturesque beauty. It is infinitely finer than I expected, and if I believed they'd let me live there for a few weeks every year, I would even build a house, and furnish it."

"And who doubts it?"

"I do; and so would you, M'Kinlay, if you talked the matter over, as I did, with a committee of the whole House. We discussed the thing very coolly and impartially; we entered upon the question of landlordism in all its bearings, what it contained of good, and where it degenerated into evil; and although they failed to convince me that capital, skill, and intelligence, backed by an honest desire to do good, were only unwarrantable interferences with people who wanted none of them, they assuredly made me believe that the pleasure of possession would be dear at the price of being shot at, and that the great probability of being thrown over a precipice rather detracted from one's enjoyment of wild scenery."

"The fellows who talk like this are not the stuff murderers are made of, Sir Gervais. They like to frighten away purchasers, just as people get up ghost stories to deter persons from taking a house. If you like the property——"

"I repeat I am charmed with it."

"In that case, don't lose it. Ireland cannot remain for ever out of the law. One day or other she must come into civilization, and these acres, that are bought for less money than so much land in South Africa or New Zealand, will be as profitable as an estate in the West Riding."

Vyner smiled and shook his head. "Have you not been hearing this story for more than a century back?"

"Let us hear it for a century still, and the investment will pay cent. per cent. But come, I will tell you of a plan to test this problem fairly. Make the estate the fortune you intend for this young girl, with a power of redemption on your part by payment of a certain sum—let us say half as much more as you are now to pay for it. By the time that she will have grown up to womanhood you will have had the opportunity of deciding whether you desire to become an Irish proprietor or not. At all events, she will have either a good round sum in hand, or an estate which certainly will be no perilous heritage to her, though it might be a dangerous possession to you. This, I think, meets every difficulty."

"Grenfell would tell us that instead of overcoming one obstacle it raises two," said Vyner, laughing.

"But why consult him on the matter?"

"Because I shall want him. I should like to make him a trustee; he's a hard-headed man of the world, and well adapted for the office."

"And whom will you name for the other? Has the girl any relative or connection of a class sufficiently elevated for the duty?"

"I suspect not; they are all peasants, and of the very poorest kind. I doubt greatly if there be one amongst the number who could read and write. Stay!" cried he, suddenly. "An idea just occurs to me, and if the notion be at all practicable, it solves every difficulty at once. The child's aunt, a peasant like the others, was married to a gentleman, an old friend and college companion of my own. Unfortunate in many ways, and, of course, lost to the world of society by this unequal match, he retired to a lonely island on the coast, where he has lived for some years in a condition and with habits scarcely above the half-savage creatures about him. He was and is still a man of considerable ability, although soured and disgusted with a world wherein he met nothing but failure. I met him last week by mere accident, having landed on the lonely rock he inhabits. I will not say he was at all pleased with the recognition, but, in short, we renewed acquaintance, and parted a little more like friends than we met. If he could be induced to accept this trust, it would accomplish all that I wish."

"Has his wife any influence over him?"

"She is dead. She died a few days since."

"Does he care for and interest himself about those who belong to her?"

"I have no means of knowing; but I suspect not."

"Then probably it would be better that you made this proposition to him without any intimation that you knew of the relationship between him and this girl; asking him to assist you in carrying out a whim—a mere caprice?"

"I have been thinking over that. I believe you are right. He might not feel indisposed to serve these people, though he might shrink from declaring them his near connections. At the same time, I feel he may refuse us on other grounds. He rejects whatever in the remotest way would lead him back into the world he has quitted. His is a passive sort of misanthropy, —I believe, the least curable kind."

"It would be a pity not to secure him; he is the very man, with his local knowledge and thorough acquaintance with the people, to give your experiment the fairest chance of success."

"Well, here goes for the attempt. Let us first have our dinner, M'Kinlay, and then I'll write your credentials. You shall go over to Arran, and use your best powers of persuasion. I'll tell you by-and-by all that you ought to know beforehand of your adversary, for adversary you'll find him, whatever subject you broach; but I shall call it a great victory if you succeed."

"Where is Arran?" asked the lawyer, in some trepidation, for he only half liked his mission.

"Here it is," said Vyner, spreading a map over the table, and pointing to some three or four insignificant dots off the coast of Donegal. "It is the most northern of these—that one."

"And how is it to be come at?"

"We must learn all that from the people at the inn here. A fishing lugger I take it——"

"I declare, frankly, I have no fancy for the expedition; nor is there, indeed any reason for it. A letter will be amply sufficient to explain your object."

"Yes, but not to urge and persuade him—not to meet the doubts and the difficulties he will suggest—not to re-assure him about this, and convince him about that. He's a clever fellow, M'Kinlay, and one who will require to examine every phase of a subject before he'll accept it."

"Good heavens! what a place to go to," cried the other, as his eyes were still intently bent upon the little spot on the map.

"The place is most interesting; some remarkable scenery and a very curious ruin of an ancient abbey."

"Not in my way—not at all in my way, Sir Gervais. I'd rather see a snug chop-house than the purest specimen of pointed Gothic."

"Well, it will be an event in your life at any rate—an incident to recall hereafter; and more than all it will be a service to myself personally, which I shall not easily forget."

"If you make a point of it, I'll certainly go. I have told you that the adventurous spirit is not my strongest characteristic. Out-of-the-way places or buildings, or out-of-the-way people, have no interest for me. They are like a language I don't know; they may be eloquent and charming to others, to me they make no appeal; but I'll go, as you wish it, and I'll do my best."

"And you'll succeed, too, I know it. Luttrell and you will understand each other at once. He'll be pleased with your purpose-like, straightforward manner, while he'd reject flatly any attempt to influence or cajole him. He'll possibly oppose his habitual indolence and his life of isolation to all plans for exertion or activity, but you'll satisfy him that we have no intention to burden him unnecessarily, and that, in all likelihood, he'll not be called upon for more than a single act of an executive nature."

"What are these luggers like? Are they considered safe?"

"The best sea-boats in the world."

"And the sailors?"

"None better in the kingdom. In fact on a coast like this——" He stopped suddenly, just remembering in time, that by any picturesque description of an iron-bound shore or an Atlantic swell, he might effectually deter M'Kinlay from all thought of the expedition. "Say nothing of what we have been talking over, at dinner," said he; "and I rejoice to say, here comes the waiter to announce it."

M'Kinlay sighed; he could have eaten with a capital appetite half an hour ago. It was all gone now. He'd have liked a stiff glass of brandy and seltzer-water, nothing more.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OLD LEAVEN.

THE little intercourse which Luttrell maintained with the world was with his agent, a gentleman who had long acted in that capacity for his family when such an office was profitable, and when portentous tin boxes on office shelves, with the name of Hamilton Luttrell on them, told of title-deeds and estates.

To this gentleman Luttrell had applied to assist him to sell a quantity of antiquarian objects, the collecting of which had been the pursuit of many a solitary day, and in cataloguing which he had passed many a long night. At first, this taste had been adopted as a pastime—a something to impart an interest to a dreary and purposeless life; but when three deficient harvests had so far lessened his income that he was driven to obtain a small loan to live, he resolved to sell his collection, and applied to his agent to aid him, making one only condition—that the bargain should not be effected in Ireland, where his name was still well known, but with some English dealer, who might never have heard of the Luttrells.

Though the carefully drawn catalogue which Luttrell forwarded comprised a variety of rare and curious objects all bearing upon and illustrating ancient Irish history, they were, with a very few exceptions, of little intrinsic value. There were weapons of stone, spear-heads and javelin points, massive clubs embossed with sharpened peebles, bronze ornaments and clasps, strangely-shapen casques and shields, and swords of forms that bespoke an antiquity long antecedent to the Roman wars, with amulets of amber and silver. Some rings and a sword-hilt alone were gold; this latter carved with marvellous beauty of design and great artistic excellence.

At last, after many months of utter silence on the matter, he received the following letter:—

"Kildare Street, Dublin.

"DEAR MR. LUTTRELL,—I am very sorry at the failure of all my attempts to dispose of your collection. Vangheest, however, in sending me back, as you wished, the catalogue yesterday, spoke of an American gentleman who appeared disposed to treat with you. As he is a perfect stranger to both of us, and the native of a distant country, I saw no reason for refusing him the permission he asked, to view the collection, and, if allowed, confer with you personally.

"I have accordingly given him a few lines of introduction, and he will present himself to you as Mr. or Captain Herodotus M. Dodge, U.S. I do not opine you will find him the possessor of much antiquarian lore; but he is an outspoken, straightforward man, with whom a business matter can be readily transacted.

"I know how reluctant you are to be intruded upon, but I am aware—better, perhaps, than yourself—that you want money at this moment, and I trust you will pardon me for having transgressed your orders respecting visitors, and made this case an exception to your rule. If, however, you persist in your determination not to receive a stranger, a line addressed to Mr. D., at Carrick's Hotel, will be in time, any day till the tenth, to prevent his visit.

"Should you deal with Mr. D., you need not give yourself any trouble about the details of the payment, as his reference to bankers and others here have perfectly satisfied me as to his respectability.

"Believe me, dear Mr. Luttrell,
"Faithfully yours,
"GEORGE CANE, for Cane and Carter."

Luttrell was very angry at this letter. It was an insufferable liberty that Cane had taken. Cane should have written—should have asked his pleasure—should have inquired whether even the certainty of selling the collection was not overpaid for at the price of this unseemly intrusion. "There is no inn on the island. This man must be my guest, and with the variable weather here, who can tell for how long? He may feel, or affect to feel, interest about the place and its people, and prolong his stay for days!"

There was, however, one passage in the letter which pained him to the quick; it was very brief, but, to him, very significant. It ran thus: "But I am aware—better, perhaps, than you are—that you are in want of money."

Now, Messrs. Cane and Carter had been for some time making advances—small it is true—to Luttrell, and as well to intimate to him that he had overdrawn with them, as to imply that they did not desire a continuance of the practice, his correspondent threw in that parenthesis—so full of meaning as it was.

There was a time, as late as his own father's day, when Messrs. Cane and Company would not have written such a letter. Not a few of the broad acres of the Luttrells had passed into their hands since that, however. They had not their country-houses and conservatories in those days; nor their sons in the "Guards;" nor a daughter married to a viscount.

How is it that men will often grow more bitter over their fallen fortunes, when they contrast them with the prosperity of others who have never injured them. Cane had actually befriended Luttrell in many ways; in keeping the agency of the small remnant of property that belonged to him, he was really performing a kind office; but Luttrell could not, for all this, forgive him for being prosperous.

He sat down to write two notes, one to Mr. Cane, a very sharp reproof for a liberty which he ought never to have presumed upon, and which nothing in their respective conditions could warrant or excuse. "While," added he, "I am no less surprised at your remark, that you are even more than myself aware of my need of money. The observation either implies a sensitive sympathy for which I was not prepared, or a covert impertinence which I hesitate to accept as credible.

"I will not receive your friend Mr. Dodge, nor shall I again trouble you with the private and personal interests of

"Your faithful servant,
"JOHN HAMILTON LUTTRELL."

The second note was even briefer. "Mr. Luttrell begs to inform Mr. H. M. Dodge that he cannot receive his visit at Arran, nor can he at present decide to dispose of his collection."

"How is the wind, Hennesy?" asked he of his boatman.

"Strong from the east, sir, and comin' on harder."

"Could you beat up to Westport, think you? I have two letters of importance to send."

"We might, sir," said the man, doubtingly, "but it's more likely we'd be blown out to sea."

"How long is this gale likely to last?"

"It's the season of these winds, your honour, and we'll have, maybe, three weeks or a month of them, now."

"In that case, you must try it. Take three men with you, and the large yawl; put some provisions and water on board; perhaps a little ballast, too."

"That we will, sir. She'll take a ton more, at least, to carry sail in this weather."

"Are you afraid to go?" asked Luttrell, and his voice was harsh, and his manner stern.

"Afraid! devil a bit afraid!" said the man, boldly, and as though the imputation had made him forget his natural respect.

"I'd not ask you to do what I'd not venture on myself."

"We all know that well, sir," said the boatman, recovering his former manner. "'Tis only that, maybe, we'll be more time about it than your honour thinks. We'll have to make a long stretch out beyond Spanish Bay, perhaps, near 'the Cobbles.'"

"I don't care how you do it, but mind that these two letters reach Westport by Monday night, or Tuesday morning at farthest. This is for the post, this for the person whose name is on it, and who will be at Carrick's Hotel. Give it if you can into his own hands, and say that there is no answer required."

"You bade me remind you, sir, that the next time the boat went over to Westport, that I was to take Master Harry, and get him measured for some clothes; but of course you'd not like to send him in this weather."

"I think not; I think there can be no doubt of that," cried Luttrell, half angrily. "It's not when the strong easterly gales have set in, and a heavy sea is coming up from the south'ard, that I'd tell you to take a boy ——" He stopped suddenly, and turning fiercely on the sailor, said, "You think I have courage enough to send you and a boat's crew out, and not to send my son. Speak out, and say it. Isn't that what you mean?"

"It is not, sir. If you towld me to take the child, I wouldn't do it."

"You wouldn't do it ?" cried Luttrell, passionately.

"I would not, sir, if you never gav' me another day's pay."

"Leave the room—leave the house, and prepare to give up your holding. I'll want that cabin of yours this day month. Do you hear me ?"

"I do, sir," said the man, with a lip pale and quivering.

"Send Sam Joyce here."

"He's only up out of the fever since Monday, sir."

"Tell Maher I want him, then; and mind me, sir," added he, as the man was leaving the room, "no story-telling, no conspiring, for if Tom Maher refuses to obey my orders, whatever they are, he'll follow you, and so shall every man of you, if I leave the island without a family except my own."

"Don't send your child out, anyways," said the man.

"Leave the room, sir," said Luttrell, imperiously; and the man, cowed and crestfallen, closed the door and withdrew.

As though to carry corroboration to the sailor's warning, a fierce blast struck the window at the moment, making the old woodwork rattle, and threatening to smash it in, while the dark sky grew darker and seemed to blend with the leaden-coloured sea.

"I want you to go over to Westport, Maher," said Luttrell to a hard-featured, weather-beaten man of about fifty, who now stood wet and dripping at the door.

"Very well, sir," was the answer.

"Take the big yawl, and any crew you please. Whenever all is ready, come up here for your orders."

"Very well, sir," said the man, and retired.

"Where's Master Harry, Molly ?" cried Luttrell, advancing into the passage that led towards the kitchen.

"He's out on the rocks, watching the sea."

"Call him in here. I want to speak to him. What are you doing, here, sir ? I told you to leave this." This stern speech was addressed to Hennesy, who, with evident signs of sorrow on his face, stood half hid beside the door.

"I was hopin' your honour wouldn't turn me out after nine years' sarvice, when I never did or said one word to displaze you."

"Away with you—be off—I have no time to parley with fellows like you. Come in here, Harry," and he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and led him into his room. "I'm sending a boat over to Westport; would you like to go in her ?"

"Wouldn't I ?" said the boy, as his eyes flashed wildly.

"You are in want of clothes, and you could go to Sweeney's and get measured for a suit."

"I do not care for the clothes; but I'd like the sail. Isn't Tim Hennesy to go?"

"Hennesy is not to go. Maher is to command the boat."

"I'd rather have Tim; but I don't care."

"Be ready then, in half an hour."

"I'm ready now."

"I mean, get another coat, something warmer, for you'll be out one night at least; and put your woollen wrapper round your throat. Molly will give it to you."

"There's thunder!" cried the boy; "I hope it won't lull the wind. It's blowing fiercely now."

"You're a good swimmer, ain't you?"

"I can beat every one but Tim."

"And what would you do if you were upset?"

"Hold on by the boat, or a spar."

"Till you were picked up? But if none came to pick you up?"

"Hold on still, till I was near enough to swim."

"And if you didn't get near enough?"

"Go down, I suppose," said the boy, with a laugh. "One can always do that!"

Luttrell nodded, and after a moment said, "Get ready now, for here's Maher coming for orders."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NOR'-WESTER.

THE day—a dark and stormy one—was drawing to a close as the yawl got under weigh. She was manned by a stout crew of five hardy islanders; for although Maher had selected but three to accompany him, Tim Hennesy volunteered, and, indeed, jumped on board, as the boat sheered off, without leave asked or given. Luttrell had parted with his boy in his habitual impassive way—reminded him that he was under Tom Maher's orders, equally on shore as on board—that he trusted to hear a good account of him on his return, and then said a cold "good-bye," and turned away.

When Harry, who rarely had so long an interview with his father, left the room, he felt a sort of relief to think it was over;

he had been neither punished nor scolded, even the warning that was given was very slight, and uttered in no unkindness.

"Give me a kiss, Molly, and throw an old shoe after me, for luck!" cried he, gaily, as he reached the door. "We've got the big yawl, and though Tom has put two reefs in the mainsail, won't I make him shake them out when we're well out to sea!"

"I'll just go and tell the master this minit, then," said she, eagerly, "and you'll see what he'll say to you."

"Will you be quiet?" said he, catching hold of her apron to detain her; "wasn't I only joking? I'm to be under Tom's orders, and of course I'll obey him."

There was a waggish drollery in the way he said this that by no means reassured her, but taking his hand, she walked down to the beach beside him, telling him to be careful of himself, and do nothing rash, and to mind what Tom Maher said, and, above all, to remember he was the last of the family, and if anything was to happen to him there was an end of the name for ever.

"And don't you think, Molly, that the world would continue to go round, even if it lost us, great as we are?"

"Ah, ye're a young imp! that's what ye are;" said she, wiping a tear from her eye as she spoke. "Tis wishin' them well I am, the same clothes. I'd rather see you in a suit of sealskin, than sent out on such a day as this, just to be measured by a tailor."

"You'd dress me worse than Brian O'Lynn, Molly," said the boy, with a merry laugh. "Did you ever hear what he did for a watch?"

"Arrah! what do I care what he did."

"Here it is, and very ingenious, too," said he:

"Bryan O'Lynn had no watch to put on,
So he scooped out a turnip to make him a one.
He then put a cricket clean under the skin,
'They'll think it is ticking,' says Bryan O'Lynn."

"May I never!" began she, trying to reprove his levity; but as he stepped into the boat at the same instant, her grief overcame all else, and she burst into tears. She threw her apron over her face to hide her emotion; but she suddenly drew it down as a wild cry, half yell, half cheer, broke from the fishermen on the shore; a squall had struck the boat just as she got under weigh, and though she lay over, reeling under the shock, she righted nobly again, and stood out boldly to sea

"There's not a finer craft in the King's navy," said a very old man who had once been a pilot. "I'd not be afeerd to go to 'Quaybeck' in her."

"Come up and taste a dhrop of sperits this wet day," whispered Molly in his ear, for his words were a balm to her aching heart.

At first from the window of his lonely room, and then, when the boat had rounded the point of land, and could be no more seen, from a little loopholed slit in the tower above him, Luttrell watched her course. Even with his naked eye he could mark the sheets of spray as they broke over the bow and flew across her, and see how the strong mast bent like a whip, although she was reduced to her very shortest sail, and was standing under a double-reefed mainsail, and a small storm-jib. Not another boat, not another sail of any kind was to be seen; and there seemed something heroically daring in that little barque, that one dark speck, as it rose and plunged, seen and lost alternately in the rolling sea.

It was only when he tried to look through the telescope, and found that his hand shook so much that he could not fix the object, that he himself knew how agitated he was. He drew his hand across his brow and found it clammy, with a profuse and cold perspiration. By this time it was so dark that he had to grope his way down the narrow stairs to his room below. He called for Molly. "Who was that you were talking to? I heard a strange voice without there."

"Old Moriarty, the pilot, your honour; I brought him in out of the wet to dry himself."

"Send him in here to me," said Luttrell, who, throwing a root of oak on the fire, sat down with his back to the door, and where no light should fall upon his face.

"It's blowing fresh, Moriarty," said he, with an affected ease of manner, as the old man entered and stood nigh to the door.

"More than fresh, your honour. It's blowin' hard."

"You say that, because you haven't been at sea these five-and twenty years; but it's not blowing as it blew the night I came up from Clew, no, nor the day that we rounded Tory Island."

"Maybe not: but it's not at its worst yet," said the old fellow, who was ill-pleased at the sneer at his seamanship.

"I don't know what the fellows here think of such weather, but a crew of Norway fishermen—ay, or a set of Deal boatmen—would laugh at it."

"Listen to that now, then," said the other, "and it's no laughing matter;" and as he spoke a fierce gust of wind tore past, carrying the spray in great sheets, and striking against the walls and windows with a clap like thunder. "That was a squall to try any boat!"

"Not a boat like the large yawl!"

"If it didn't throw two tons of water aboard of her, my name isn't Moriarty."

"Master Harry is enjoying it, I'm certain," said Luttrell, trying to seem at ease.

"Well! It's too much for a child," said the old man, sorrowfully.

"What do you mean by a child? He's no child, he's a well-grown boy, and if he's ever to have a man's heart in him, ought to begin to feel it now."

"It was no night to send him out, anyhow; and I say it, though it was your honour did it!"

"Because you're an old fool, and you think you can presume upon your white head and your tottering limbs. Look here; answer me this——"

A fearful thunder roll, followed by a rattling crash like small-arms, drowned his words. "It *is* a severe night," said he, "and if she wasn't a fine sea-boat, with a good crew on board her, I'd not feel so easy!"

"Good as she is, it will thry her."

"What a faint-hearted old dog you are, and you were a pilot once."

"I was, sir. I took George Bowyer up the Chesapeak, and Commodore Warren could tell you whether I know the Baltic Sea."

"And you are frightened by a night like this!"

"I'm not frightened, sir; but I'd not send a child out in it, just for——" He stopped and tried to fall back behind the door.

"Just for what?" said Luttrell, with a calm and even gentle voice—"just for what?"

"How do I know, your honour? I was saying more than I could tell."

"Yes; but let me hear it. What was the reason that you supposed—why do you think I did it?"

Deceived and even lured on to frankness by the insinuating softness of his manner, the old man answered, "Well, it was just your honour's pride, the old Luttrell pride, that said, 'We'll never send a man where we won't go ourselves,' and it was out of that you'd risk your child's life!"

"I accused you of being half a coward a minute ago," said Luttrell, in a low deep voice, that vibrated with intense passion, "but I'll tell you, you're a brave man—a very brave man—to dare to speak such words as these to me! Away with you; be off; and never cross this threshold again." He banged the door loudly after the old man, and walked up and down the narrow room with impatient steps. Hour after hour he strode up and

Molly praying for Young Harry's Safety.

down with the restless activity of a wild animal in a cage, and as though by mere motion he could counteract the fever that was consuming him. He went to the outer door, but he did not dare to open it, such was the force of the storm; but he listened to the wild sounds of the hurricane—the thundering roar of the sea, as it mingled with the hissing crash, as the waves were broken on the rocks. Some old tree that had resisted many a gale, seemed at last to have yielded, for the rustling clash of broken timber could be heard, and the rattling of the smaller branches as they were carried along by the swooping wind. "What a night! what a terrible night!" he muttered to himself. There was a faint light seen through the chinks of the kitchen door; he drew nigh and peeped in. It was poor Molly on her knees, before a little earthenware image of the Virgin, to whom she was offering a candle, while she poured out her heart in prayer. He looked at her, as, with hands firmly clasped before her, she rocked to and fro in the agony of her affliction, and noiselessly he stole away and entered his room.

He opened a map upon the table, and tried to trace out the course the boat might have taken. There were three distant headlands to clear before she could reach the open sea. One of these, the Turk's Head, was a noted spot for disasters, and dreaded by fishermen even in moderately fresh weather. He could not take his eyes from the spot; that little speck so full of fate to him. To have effaced it from the earth's surface at that moment, he would have given all that remained to him in the world! "Oh what a destiny!" he cried in his bitterness, "and what a race! Every misfortune, every curse that has fallen upon us, of our own making! Nothing worse, nothing so bad, have we ever met in life as our own stubborn pride, our own vindictive natures." It required some actual emergency, some one deeply momentous crisis, to bring this proud and stubborn spirit down to self-accusation; but when the moment *did* come, when the dam *was* opened, the stream rushed forth like the long pent-up waters of a cataract.

All that he had ever done in life, all the fierce provocations he had given, all the insults he had uttered, his shortcomings too, his reluctance to make amends when in the wrong, passed spectre-like before him, and in the misery of his deep humiliation he felt how all his struggle in life had been with himself.

That long night—and how long it was!—was spent thus. Every wild gust that shook the window-frames, every thunderclap that seemed to make the old ruin rock, recalling him to thoughts of the wild sea on which this poor child was tossing.

"Have they got well out to sea by this time, or are they beating between the Basket Rocks and the Turk's Head?" would he ask himself over and over. "Can they and will they put back if they see the storm too much for them?" He tried to remember his parting words. Had he taunted them with reluctance to venture out? Had he reflected on their courage? He could not now recall his words, but he hoped and he prayed that he had not.

The leaden grey of morning began to break at last, and the wind seemed somewhat to abate, although the sea still rolled in such enormous waves, and the spray rose over the rocks and fell in showers over the shingle before the windows. Luttrell strained his eyes through the half-murky light, but could descry nothing like a sail seaward. He mounted the stairs of the tower, and stationing himself at the loopholed window, gazed long and earnestly at the sea. Nothing but waves—a wild, disordered stretch of rolling water—whose rocking motion almost at last made his head reel.

The old pilot, with his hat tied firmly on, was standing below, and, careless of the beating rain, was looking out to sea.

"The gale is lessening, Moriarty," cried out Luttrell; "it has blown itself out."

It was evident the old man had not caught the words aright, for all he said was, "She's a fine sea-boat if she did, sir," and moved away.

"He thinks it doubtful—he does not believe they have weathered the storm," said Luttrell; and he sat down with his head between his hands, stunned and almost senseless.

There is no such terrible conflict as that of a proud spirit with misfortune. He who sees nothing in his calamities but his own hard fate has the dreariest and least hopeful of all battles before him. Now, though Luttrell was ready to utter his self-accusings aloud, and charge himself audibly with the faults that had wrecked his life, yet, strange as it may seem, the spirit of true humility had never entered his heart, far less any firm resolve to repent.

With all the terrible consequences that his unbridled temper could evoke before him, he still could not but regard himself as more persecuted than erring. "I did not make myself," cried he, impiously. "I no more implanted the passions that sway than the limbs that move me! Other men—is not the world full of them?—have been as haughty, as unyielding, and domineering as myself, and yet have had no such disasters heaped upon them—far from it. Out of their very faults has sprung their fortune. In their pride they have but asserted that superiority that they knew they possessed."

While he reasoned thus, his heart, truer to nature than his brain, trembled at every freshening of the storm, and sickened as the dark squalls shot across the sea.

Nor was his agony less that he had to control it, and not let those about him see what he suffered. He sat down to his breakfast at the accustomed hour, and affected to eat as usual. Indeed, he rebuked Molly for some passing carelessness, and sent her away almost choked with tears, "as if," as she sobbed to herself—"as if she was a dog. To know whether the milk 'took the fire' or not! Musha! any man but himself wouldn't know whether it was milk or salt water was afore him."

It was his habit to pass the morning in reading. He would not appear to deviate from this custom, but sat down to his books as usual. No sooner, however, was all still and quiet around him than he stole up to the tower, and stationed himself at the narrow window that looked over the sea.

The wind had greatly abated, and the sea also gone down, but there was still the heavy roll and the deafening crash upon the shore, that follow a storm. "The hurricane is passing westward," muttered Luttrell; "it has done its work here!" And a bitter scorn curled his lips as he spoke. He was calling upon his pride to sustain him. It was a hollow ally in his time of trouble; for as he gazed and gazed, his eyes *would* grow dim with tears, and his heavy heart would sigh, as though to bursting.

As the day wore on, and the hour came when he was habitually about, he strolled down to the beach, pretending to pick up shells, or gather sea anemones, as he was wont. The fishermen saluted him respectfully as he passed, and his heart throbbed painfully as he saw, or fancied he saw, a something of compassionate meaning in their faces. "Do they believe, can they think that it is all over, and that I am childless?" thought he. "Do they know that I am desolate?" A pang shot through him at this, that made him grasp his heart with his hand to suppress the agony.

He rallied after a minute or so, and walked on. He had just reached the summit of the little bay, when a sort of cheer or cry from those behind, startled him. He turned and saw that the fishermen were gathered in a group upon one of the rocks, all looking and pointing seaward; with seeming indolence of gait, while his anxiety was almost suffocating him, he lounged lazily towards them.

"What are the fellows looking at?" said he to the old pilot, who, with some difficulty, had just scrambled down from the rock.

"A large lugger, your honour, coming up broad."

"And is a fishing boat so strange a thing in these waters?"

"She's out of the fishing grounds altogether, your honour; for she's one of the Westport boats. I know her by the dip of her bowsprit."

"And if she is, what does it signify to us?" asked Luttrell, sternly.

"Only that she's bearin' up for the island, your honour, and it's not often one of them comes here."

"The seldomer the better," said Luttrell, gloomily. "When the fellows find there are no grog-shops here, they turn to mischief, break down our fences, lop our trees, and make free with our potatoes. I'll have to do one of these days what I have so often threatened—warn all these fellows off, and suffer none to land here."

Perhaps the old pilot thought that other and very different feelings might at that moment have had the sway over him, for he looked away, and shook his head mournfully.

"She has a flag at the peak," cried one of the men from the rock.

"She has what?" asked Luttrell, impatiently.

"She has the half-black, half-white ensign, your honour."

"Your own flag at the peak," said the pilot.

"More of their insolence, I suppose," said Luttrell; "because they have a hamper or a parcel on board for me, perhaps."

"I don't think it's that, sir," said the other, moodily.

"What is it, then?" cried he, harshly.

"'Tis, maybe, your honour, that they have some news of——" he was going to say "Master Harry," but the ghastly paleness of Luttrell's face appalled and stopped him.

"News of what did you say?"

"Of the big yawl, sir; they maybe, saw her at sea."

"And if they had, would that give them a right to hoist the Luttrell flag? We are low enough in the world, Heaven knows!" he cried; "but we are not come to that pass yet, when every grocer of Westport can carry our crest or our colours." This burst of mock anger was but to cover a rush of real terror; for he was trembling from head to foot, his sight was dimmed, and his brain turning. He felt the coward, too, in his heart, and did not dare to face the old man again. So, turning abruptly away, he went back to the house.

"My fate will soon be decided now," said he, as he tottered into his room, and sat down, burying his face in his hands.

The group of fishermen on the rock grew larger and larger, till at last above thirty were clustered on the point, all eagerly watching, and as earnestly discussing every motion of the lugger. It was soon clear that her course was guided by some one who knew the navigation well, for instead of holding on straight for the bay, where she was to cast anchor, she headed to a point far above it, thus showing that her steersman was aware of the strong shore current that had force enough to sweep her considerably out of her course. Meanwhile they had ample time to discuss her tonnage, her build, her qualities for freight and speed, and her goodness as a sea-boat. "I wonder did she see the yawl?" said one at length, for, with a strange and scarcely accountable terror, none would approach the theme that was uppermost in every heart. The word once uttered all burst in at once, "'Tis with news of her she's come! She saw her 'put in' to Belmullet, or to Westport, or she saw her sheltering, perhaps, under the high cliffs of the coast, 'lying to,' till the gale lightened." None would say more than this.

"Hurrah!" cried one at last, with a joyful cheer, that made every heart bound, "I see Master Harry; he's steerin'!"

"So he is!" shouted another; "he's settin' up on the weather gunwale, and his head bare too. I see his hair flyin' wild about him."

"Go up and tell the master."

"Faix, I'm afeerd; I never spoke to him in my life."

"Will you, Owen Riley?"

"Sorra step I'll go; he turned me out of the place for saying that the cobble wanted a coat of pitch, and she sank under me after. Let old Moriarty go."

"So I will. 'Tis good news I'll have to bring him, and that never hurt the messenger." And so saying, the old pilot hastened, as fast as his strength would permit, to the house.

The door was open, and he passed in. He sought for Molly in the kitchen, but poor Molly was away on the beach, following the course the lugger seemed to take, and hoping to be up at the point she might select to anchor at. The old man drew cautiously nigh Luttrell's door, and tapped at it, respectfully.

"Who's there? Come in; come in at once," cried Luttrell, in a harsh voice. "What have you to say? Say it out."

"'Tis to tell your honour that Master Harry——"

"What of him? What of him?" screamed Luttrell; and he seized the old man by the shoulders, and shook him violently.

"He's steerin' the lugger, your honour, and all safe."

A cry, and a wild burst of laughter, broke from the overburdened heart, and Luttrell threw himself across the table and sobbed aloud.

Overcome by terror at such a show of feeling in one he had deemed dead to every emotion, the old man tried to move away unseen; but just as he had closed the door behind him, Luttrell screamed out, "Come back. You saw him—you saw him yourself?"

"No, sir; but better eyes than mine did, and they could see that he had no cap on his head."

"And they were sure it was he?"

"There's no mistakin' him among a thousand!"

"If they deceived me—if this was false——" he stopped and wiped the cold sweat from his forehead. "There, I see her now. She's rounding to—she's going to anchor. I have been poorly of late, Moriarty," said he, in a low subdued tone; "things fret and worry me that I'd not let annoy me if I were stronger. Men of *your* stamp fancy there can never be much amiss with men of *mine*, because we have enough to eat and drink. What's that noise without? Who is talking there?"

The door opened suddenly, and Harry, with flushed face and wildly disordered hair, and with clothes all wet and dripping, stood before his father. He made no motion to embrace, or even approach him, but stood within the door respectful, but not abashed, and as if waiting for leave to advance farther.

Luttrell's cheek trembled, and changed colour twice, but, subduing his emotion with a great effort, he said in a tone of affected indifference, "You had rough weather—did you make Westport?"

"No, sir; we lost the boat."

"Lost the boat: how was that?"

"She filled; at least, she took so much water that she would not answer her helm, and then she heeled over and went down."

"Down all at once."

"Yes; I had barely time to cut away our ensign from the peak. I thought I'd save the Luttrell colours, and so I did."

"Were you far from land at the time?"

"About fifteen miles; as good as fifty, for the wind was strong off shore, and such a sea!"

"And what did you do?"

"We had plenty of spars. There were oars, and stretchers, and four large planks of the flooring, all floating about, and each of us laid hold of something."

"By my sowle you're a brave boy!" cried the old pilot, who could restrain himself no longer.

Luttrell turned a fierce look on the old man, and pointed to the door, and the poor fisherman slunk away overwhelmed with shame.

"So we've lost our best boat, and all her tackle," said Luttrell, moodily; "a heavy loss."

"It is!" said the boy, gravely; "but the fellows that picked us up say, that they don't know how we held on so long with an undecked boat. They were watching us for an hour before we went over."

"Who were they?"

"Westport men; they were taking that man over here you gave us the letter for—a Yankee fellow."

"What do you mean by a Yankee, sir?"

"Tom Crab called him so to me, that's all I know; but he's a good fellow, and gave me some brandy when he pulled me on board; and I hear he rubbed me till I got quite warm."

"Where is he now?"

"He's helping them to carry that sick man up here, and I don't think he's so sick as they say. I'm sure it's just fright, and no more; for every time the boat went about in stays, he'd raise his head and give a groan."

"Of whom are you talking?"

"I don't know his name, sir; but they tell me he wants to see you very much. There he goes; they have got him in that blanket and are bringing him here."

"Where will I put the sick gentleman, sir?" said Molly, coming in; "may I make a bed in the store-room?"

"Do so," said Luttrell, briefly; "and for the other give him the room that was your mistress's; and do you, Harry, go out and be civil and attentive to these people. I will see them myself later on. They must put up with rough fare, but they came self-invited."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SKIPPER.

LUTTRELL had just made up his mind that he would inform the American visitor he would receive him, when Harry entered, leading the stranger by the hand. "That's papa," said the boy, and retired.

"I hope I see you in very good health, sir," said Mr. Dodge, advancing boldly, and shaking Luttrell's hand in a hearty, vigorous manner. "You live in a pretty lonesome spot here, and, as the man said to the whip-snake in the spout, 'you ain't easy to get at.' "

"Perhaps that was one of the reasons that led me to choose it, sir," said Luttrell, stiffly, "and had you got my note, you'd have seen that I never intended you should incur the inconvenience of coming to it."

"Well, sir, it warn't pleasant; I'll tell no lie, it warn't pleasant! I'm a seafarin' man, sir, and I've been one all my life; but such a harbour to get out of, and such a port to get into, and such a craft to do it in, I never seed in all my born days."

"You compel me to repeat my regrets, sir. I am, indeed, sincerely sorry for your fruitless journey."

"Well, it warn't all time lost—we picked up that crew, and that lad of yours. He's a fine 'buoy,' sir; I know 'buoys' well, and I say it again, he'll be a smart man."

Luttrell bowed a cold and haughty acknowledgment.

"He ain't a bit like you, not a bit; there's no pride, no stand-off about *him;* he's a raal frank, straight-ahead one. I seed it before he was well aboard. It was all I could do to keep him from swimming after his cap—a darned old sealskin thing it was—but he said it was his best one, and he'd not get another in a hurry."

"His frankness deserved all your praise, sir, it went to the extent of exposing his father's poverty."

"And if it did—what o' that? You ain't ashamed of it, are you? Look at me, sir; I have a matter of seventy thousand dollars in the Tennessee Bank, and a trifle more in Ohio scrip, and I own every timber in the barque *Prettyman Quincey Squash*, four hundred and odd tons, a clipper to sail, and a whale for freight, and I ain't proud, nor no ways blown up to burstin' for that!"

"I am delighted to know of your prosperity, sir, for your sake," said Luttrell, coldly.

"Mind," said the other, who accepted the words in their most flattering sense, "I didn't say it was all got with my hands in my 'pants-'pockets. I had a darn'd deal of smart work for it. I was up among the Injians for four years, I was over the Rocky Mountains trappin', I was a cook aboard a south sea whaler, and" —here he winked one eye, and gave Luttrell a good-humoured poke with his fingers—"and I did a little in Ebony off the Samsoo River, you understand; unwholesome work it was, with the baracoons always flooded, and the alligators flopping through the mud, and stirring up foul air and fever. Ugh!" he cried, with a wry face, "you'd see an ugly sort of a blotch on your cheek at night, and before the same hour next evening the ground sharks would be a fitin' over you. You haven't got anything to drink, have you?"

"I can, unfortunately, offer you nothing but our mountain whisky; it is home-made, however, and not bad."

While Luttrell took a bottle and some glasses from a small cupboard in the wall, Mr. Dodge employed himself in a leisurely examination of the chamber and its furniture. "May I never!" exclaimed he, "if it ain't a droll sort of crib. Why, stranger, I'd not live here three months without making something better to sit on, and handier to eat off, than these. Just you give me a hatchet, and a hammer, and a handful of nails, to-morrow morning early, and see if I won't."

"I am afraid my furniture deserves all the ill you can say of it," said Luttrell, with a faint smile.

"That ain't a chair—it's not like a chair."

"I will not defend it, certainly."

"And yet it shows why you Britishers never can, by any possibility, be a great people—no, sir, never."

"I am really curious to hear that explanation."

"Well, sir," said he, tossing off a fresh tumbler of undiluted whisky, "you're a goin' to hear it—but 'don't be impatient,' as the bush squirrel said to the young mouse, 'I've got your mother in my mouth, but I'll eat you presently.' Here's how it is. When you was makin' that chair, you had in your mind some old-fashioned, ramshackle, nine-cornered machine you had seen of your father's, or your grandfather's, and nothin' would persuade you but to imitate that. It was wisdom of your ancestors—but we never had no ancestors. We didn't begin the world with fifty cranks in our head about how some helpless old critter ten centuries back would ha' tried to do this, or to mend that. There's the difference between us, sir; and mind my words, when we've got a ten-inch gun that'll send a shot from Long Island to the Battery Point, you Britishers will be a going back to bows and arrows, and a paintin' your bodies blue, like your ancestors."

"The picture is not flattering," said Luttrell, gravely. "And now, sir, let us talk of something more nearly interesting to us. I am informed by my correspondent that you have seen the catalogue of my small collection, and desire to examine the objects themselves."

"If that's a home brew, stranger, it does you more credit than the chair," said Mr. Dodge, smacking his lips after the third tumbler of whisky.

"I am proud to have anything worth offering you, sir."

"If you've a barrel or two of that spirit to dispose of, we'll deal, sir, that's a fact;" and Mr. Dodge emptied the bottle into his glass.

"I'm not certain whether my resources extend so far, but if they do, the whisky is much at your service, and I will feel honoured if you accept it."

"Now for the gimcracks—let's see 'em," said Mr. Dodge, as though eager to show how promptly he could respond to a graceful or generous action.

"Some of the gimcracks are here before you," said Luttrell, making a rather awkward attempt to smile, as he repeated the word. "This curiously misshapen attempt at a figure is, I have every reason to believe, an image of the idol 'Crom,' the object of worship to the Irish in the days of Paganism. You see he holds in his hand a sort of weapon like a fork."

"It ain't a brand, and it ain't a fork! The Choctaws have idols that beat that critter hollow, and they stick eyes in them of a red stone that sparkles when there's light on it. What's this?"

"An ancient Irish spear, or javelin."

"It's a whale harpoon, and a rare bad one to boot; the spike ain't well fastened, and no lead on the butt-end. Here's a bowie-knife, ain't it?"

"It's the sword of an Irish chieftain, and was found in the tomb of Thady O'Shaughlen, Prince of the Keil, and the lands of Maroon; the inscription that you see here——"

"I see nothing but scratches, made belike with an old nail or a dinner-fork—they ain't letters."

"This inscription signifies 'I am.'"

"Well, I'm blessed if I believe them's old—there're rubbish, stranger, jist rubbish—and as for the big dish——"

"It is a shield—a more perfect specimen is not extant. It was the battle-shield of Brian Ogh-na-Tiernach; he was killed in the great battle of Gongal-a-Murrah, which some historians have confounded with the battle of Claddahmore."

Perfectly insensible to the sneers, or the not less offensive ridicule expressed by the American, Luttrell went on displaying object after object with all the zeal of one who gloried in his pursuit, and delighted in his success as an antiquarian. He drew forth rare scraps of manuscript, some worn and tattered fragments discoloured by age, and to all seeming undecipherable; he read out names of kings and saints, valiant chieftains, and holy martyrs, whom he mentioned with a voice tremulous with veneration; and he showed signet-rings and amulets they had worn, as a priest might have displayed the most sacred relics.

"Look here, stranger," said the Yankee, as he threw himself into the old chair, and stretched out his legs to the fullest extent, "there's a museum in my native town of Halkanpolis, and I want to make 'em a present; it's to be somethin' nobody ever seed the like of afore, nor ever will again. I du think this gatherin' here is pretty nigh that ticket! And now, I say, what will you take for the whole bilin' as it stands?"

"You have not seen one-tenth of the collection as yet!" cried Luttrell, whose zeal as an antiquarian was far greater than his eagerness as a vendor. "There's the great book of the Three Curses."

"We can do the swearin' and cursin' pretty well without a book where I come from," said the Yankee, with a grin.

"Diarmid's Token, as it is called. This curious gem, with its setting of pure gold, was formerly believed to be a protection against witchcraft."

"In my country, Britisher, it's the witches would want the amulet! We're a pretty hard set down there, and can take care of ourselves without any help from charms. Come now—let's deal; what's the whole figure in one word?"

"You are unjust to both of us," said Luttrell. "You neither know what I want to sell, or yourself to buy. Let me go on and show you some curious relics of a later period; they may have more interest for you, perhaps."

"Not a hickory shaving's difference, whether you showed me a trowel that helped to build Babel, or a snuff-box of Queen Bess. If you want to please me, talk of dollars, stranger, hard dollars."

Luttrell's face flushed with a passing anger; this reducing him to the position of a tradesman, first displaying and then pricing his wares, sorely tried a temper that was never proof against much pressure. The purpose-like cold face of the American, however, showed him that the man meant no covert impertinence by his demand: but simply desirous of finishing a bargain as speedily as might me.

"I am sorry, sir," said he, at length, "that you will not let me lay before you even the few objects that I prize the most; however, as you give me no choice in the matter, and as circumstances render me anxious to part with my collection, I obey you. I estimated the whole at three hundred pounds. My agent informed me that, in London, two hundred pounds was deemed the value, and I never got a higher offer than a hundred and fifty, which I refused, but which I will now take, if offered me."

The American took a very scrubby note-book from his pocket, and made a short calculation with a pencil.

"Well!" said he, in a drawling, dreary sort of way, "it ain't much. I suppose you was years over it?"

"Yes," said Luttrell, taken suddenly off his guard, "they occupied me many very sad days and nights. They were labours that lightened sorrow, and took me away from cares that were eating into my heart."

"Ah! and how much better you'd have been, stranger, if you'd ha' been doin' something genuine useful, something to make yourself and others more comfortable, and not a grubbin' after old shoe-buckles and saint' shinbones. Well, you don't think so! No matter; that's our way o' looking at it. Now to business. There's just one thing in these diggins that has tuk my fancy. It's the only thing here that I'd give a red cent for, on my own account; but I do like it wonderful. I don't suppose you'll let me have it to buy, but if you'll jist give a loan of it, we'll say for a year or two—two years—I'll close the deal, and give you your first price, fifteen hundred dollars."

Luttrell's dark face lighted up at the prospect of relief from much embarrassment, and his eyes ranged over the room to see what it possibly could be that had captivated his strange visitor's fancy. A few gaffs, a single-barrel gun, and some fishing-tackle, were in one corner, and a pair of high sealskin boots in another, and a rough wolf-like "lurcher" lay under the table—could it be any of these? It was scarcely credible, and yet the American had seen none other—he had walked straight from the landing-place to the Abbey. "What signifies what it is?" said Luttrell to himself. "It is the caprice of an unlettered fellow, who would, perhaps, care more for a tobacco-pouch than for my 'Book of the Four Gospels.'"

"I have no doubt that I shall accept your offer, and gladly accept it," said Luttrell; "but it would gratify me if you were to say what it is that you desire to possess."

"It's then just as likely you'd refuse me."

"And I mistake you much if, in such a case, you'd hold me to my bargain!"

For the first time the American's features brightened; the dull leaden cheek coloured, and the firm-set thin lip curved into a pleasant smile as he said, "You're right there, Britisher—you're right there. I'd not ha' clinched the nail, if I saw it was goin' to fester you! Here's how it is, then," and he drew a long breath to give him courage—"here's how it is—I want your 'buoy.'"

"My what?"

"Your buoy; your son!"

"You want my son," said Luttrell, drawing himself up, and looking with an air of haughty insolence. "Have you forgotten, sir, which side of the Atlantic you are standing on, and that you are no longer in a land where men deal in their fellow-men? Or is it that, presuming on what poverty you have seen here, you dare to insult me with a proposal your own mean whites would have resented with a bowie-knife?"

"You ha' been a rare chap on a stump, Britisher, that's a fact!" said the Yankee, coolly. "Your words come rushin' out like water out of a pump; but they don't squash me, for all that. Hairy Dodge—Dan Webster always called me Hairy, the short for Herodotus—Hairy Dodge is a hard grit, and it's not every millstone can grind him."

"Will you do me the favour, sir, to accept the very humble hospitality I can offer," said Luttrell, proudly, "and let there be no more question of any business between us? I think I heard mention of a sick friend who accompanied you."

"He ain't a friend of mine. It was a critter I met at the inn, and who wanted to come over here to see you, and so we agreed we'd take the lugger between us."

"He is ill, I am told."

"Jist fright—nothing but fright! The first sea that took the boat on the quarter, he cried out 'Lord a mercy on us!' 'Oh,' are ye there?' says I; 'are ye prayin' for that sort o' thing?' and, surely, he did go at it, till he grew too sick for anything but groans. There was no use reasonin' with him, for all he said was, 'Put me ashore where you like, and I'll give you five hundred pounds. He got up to a thousand; and once, when the peak halyards gave way, and the sail came clattering down, he raised the bid to half his whole fortune."

"So that there is no actual malady in the case?"

"Nothin' o' the kind. It's jist fright—mere fright! How you're ever to get him off this to the mainland again is clean beyond me. He'll not go, that's certain, if he can help it."

"I must look to him, and see that, so far as our very poor accommodation serves, he wants nothing. You'll excuse me, I trust, sir."

Luttrell spoke in a cold and formal tone, hoping that his visitor, seeing no prospect of any transaction between them, would now take his leave. Mr. Dodge, however, either did not deem the battle lost, or he saw no reason to retire from the field, for he disposed himself once more in the old chair, and taking out a cigar about as long as a modern parasol, prepared to smoke.

"You haven't any objection to this sort o' thing?" he asked coolly, as he lit it.

"None whatever. I'd say, make yourself at home, sir, if it were not that this humble house of mine is so little like a home."

"It will look jollier in the evening, when there's a good fire on the hearth, and a strong brew o' that pleasant spirit smokin' afore us;" and Mr. Dodge vouchafed a strange sort of grin, which was the nearest approach he could make to a laugh, and Luttrell, stung by the notion that another was assuming to do the honours of *his* house, and to himself too, retired hastily without speaking.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAWYER "ABROAD."

To reach the "store-room" where Mr. M'Kinlaylay—for of course it is needless to inform our readers he was the much terrified voyager alluded to—Luttrell was obliged to pass through the kitchen, and in so doing beheld a scene which had never before presented itself to his eyes in that spot. Molly Ryan, feeling all the importance of the occasion, and well knowing that her master would never remember to give her any orders on the subject, had issued a general requisition for supplies all over the island, which was so quickly and well responded to, that the place looked less like a room in a dwelling-house than a great mart for all sorts of provisions.

Great baskets of fish stood on every side—fish of the strangest and most uncouth forms many of them, and with names as uncouth. There were varieties of ugliness among them to gratify the most exacting naturalist, flat-headed, many-toothed monsters, with bony projections all over them, and dorsal fins like hand-saws. Even the cognate creatures wore an especial wildness in that wild spot, and lobsters looked fiercer, and crabs more crabbed, while oysters, least aggressive of all floating things, had a ragged and rocky exterior that seemed to defy all attempt at penetration. Besides, there were hampers of eggs, and "creels" of potatoes, and such other garden produce as the simple cultivation permitted. While, meekly in one corner, and awaiting his fate with that air of conscious martyrdom which distinguishes the race, stood a very lean sheep, fastened by a hay-rope to the leg of a dresser.

But the object which more than others attracted Luttrell's attention, was a pale, sallow-faced man, who sat next the fire on a low seat, all propped up by pillows, and his legs enveloped in a blanket; his wan and singular appearance being considerably heightened by the feathers of a goose having lighted on him, giving him half the look of some enormous fowl in the act of being plucked. This addition to his picturesqueness was contributed by Harry, who, engaged in plucking a goose at the opposite side of the fire, sent all the down and feathers in that direction. Harry himself, without shoes or stockings, indeed with nothing on but a flannel shirt and trousers, was entertaining the stranger, and giving him, so far as he could, an insight into the life and habits of the islanders.

Mr. M'Kinlay repairing damages after the Storm

It is perhaps fortunate for me that it is not part of my task to record the contributions to history which Harry Luttrell afforded the stranger; they were not, possibly, divested of a little aid from that fancy which narrators are sometimes led to indulge in, and certainly Mr. M'Kinlay felt on hearing them, that terrible as were the perils of the voyage, the danger that beset his place of refuge seemed infinitely more terrible. A few traditionary maxims were all that they knew of law, of religion they knew still less; in a word, the stranger learned that he was in the midst of a people who cared no more for British rule than they did for the sway of the Grand Llama; and in a place where, if it were very difficult to live, few things were so easy as to get rid of life.

So intensely interested was M'Kinlay in the boy's narrative, that he never noticed Luttrell, who entered the kitchen, and made his way towards him. Luttrell himself was so preoccupied with one thought, that he hardly acknowledged the salutations of the people who made way for him to pass. The thought that engaged him was this: that the man before him was the bearer of a writ against him. That the law, which in his fastness he had so long defied or evaded, had at last tracked him home, and though he knew that, were this to be the case, nothing could be easier for him than to conceal himself in the island—there were spots there, where, had it been safe to have followed, no search could have discovered him—yet, in the passionate boldness which prompted him always, to meet the coming peril half way, he now sought out this man, whatever might be his mission, to confront him.

Who can tell, besides, what an insolent pride he felt in being able to say to the emissary of the law, "Go back to those who sent you, and tell them that you saw and spoke to Luttrell of Arran, but that you did not dare to lay a hand upon him, nor utter the stupid formula of your craft, because one single word from him would have settled your doom for ever; that he did not avoid nor evade you; that he received you courteously, and, so far as he could, hospitably; but with the proud consciousness that *he* was more the master of *your* fate than were you of *his*, and that the wisest thing you could do was to forget the errand you came upon, and go back as you came." With some such thoughts as these Luttrell now came forward and stood before the stranger, and for some seconds each looked in silence at the other.

"Are you Mr. Luttrell of Arran?" asked M'Kinlay, in a low feeble tone.

"I am accustomed to believe, sir, that a stranger usually announces his own name and quality first, when presenting himself in the house of another," said Luttrell, slowly and gravely.

"I ask pardon; my name is Robert M'Kinlay, sir, of Furnival's Inn, and 28, Regent's Terrace, London, conveyancer."

"And I am John Hamilton Luttrell of Arran. Now that we know each other, are there any matters we can treat of, or is this meeting to have merely the character of a pleasant *rencontre?*"

"It was business brought me here, Mr. Luttrell!" said M'Kinlay, with a groan of such intense sincerity that Luttrell almost smiled at it.

"Whenever you feel equal to treat of it, you'll find me at your service," said Luttrell.

"Could it be now, Mr. Luttrell—could it be now?" cried M'Kinlay, with eagerness.

"It shall be this minute, if you desire it."

Unwrapping the blanket from around him, and disposing it, not very gracefully, perhaps, over his shoulders, Mr. M'Kinlay scrambled rather than walked after Luttrell to his room.

"Ah, sir!" cried he, as he entered, "if I had but the shadow of a suspicion of what the expedition was before me, I'd have refused flatly; ay, sir, if I had to throw up the agency for it the day after."

"I am truly sorry, sir, your impressions of this place should be so unfavourable."

Mr. M'Kinlay was too full of his disastrous experiences to listen to excuses, and he went on, "People cross the Atlantic every week and don't suffer one-half what I did since I left Westport. I vow I think they might round the Cape with less actual danger; and when we tacked about and ran down to take up the creatures that were upset, one of our sailors—no, indeed, but two of them—declared that it was at the imminent risk of our own lives we were doing it; that if something held on, or didn't hold on, I forget which, and that if we were to get entangled in the wreck—but I can't describe it, only I remember that the American—the greatest savage I ever met in my life—took a pistol out of his pocket, and swore he'd shoot the man at the helm if he didn't bear up for the wreck. He swore—I'll never forget his awful oaths, doubly terrible at such a moment—that he saw a boy, or, as he called it, 'a buoy,' on a spar waving his cap to us, and he said, 'I'll go down to him if we upset beside him.' Yes, sir, it sounds incredible that a man so dead to any sentiment of humanity could exist, and who could declare that he'd imperil five lives, and his own, too, just out of—what shall I call it?—a whim, a caprice, a fancy, and for what?—for some fishermen, some starving creatures whose miserable lives ought to make death a release, and a boy that possibly, until your kind cook gave him leave to sit at the kitchen fire, had no home to go to to dry himself."

Luttrell's face grew almost purple, and then, of a sudden, ashy pale. To suppress the passionate impulse that worked within him made him feel sick almost to fainting, but he did suppress it, and with an immense effort of self-control said, "And the American, you say, was resolved that he'd save the boy."

"Ah! at any cost! indeed, he had the cruelty to say to myself, 'If the boat goes over, mind that you keep up' to windward, or to leeward, or somewhere, I don't know where, for I was well aware that it was down I should go. 'You can swim,' said he, 'I suppose?' 'Not a stroke,' said I. 'It don't matter,' said he, 'you can grip on all the same.' Yes, sir, that was his unfeeling remark: 'You can grip on all the same.'"

"But he declared that the boy he *would* save!" cried Luttrell with a scornful toss of his head at the other's prolixity.

"That he did; I am willing to make oath of it, let the consequences be what they may to him."

"He never told *me* of that," said Luttrell, thoughtfully.

"I should think not, sir; it's not very likely that a man will parade his own inhumanity, and declare how he risked five valuable lives to save a few savage creatures, who might as well be drowned at sea as die of starvation on shore."

"You are severe, sir. You judge us somewhat hardly. With all our barbarism, we have our uses, and, more too, we have ties and affections pretty much like our betters." Though there was far more sadness than sarcasm in the way Luttrell said these words, Mr. M'Kinlay winced under the reproof they conveyed, and hastily blurted out his excuses.

"You cannot suppose I could have meant to include you, sir. You couldn't imagine that in speaking of these poor ignorant creatures, I had the slightest intention——"

"I never suspect an insult where it is possible to believe such was not intended, sir," said Luttrell, haughtily. "But I don't think that we are here now to discuss the fishermen of Arran, or their claim to be deemed civilized."

"You are right—you are quite right, Mr. Luttrell. I ask pardon for all this digression, the more since it was entirely personal; but a man's first shipwreck takes a wonderful hold on his imagination;" and the lawyer laughed with one of those practised laughs which, by setting others off, frequently cut short an unpleasant discussion. Luttrell was, however, impassive in his gravity; if anything, he looked more stern than before. "I have come here," resumed M'Kinlay, "at the request of my friend and client, Sir Gervais Vyner. This letter is my introduction to you.

Luttrell took it, read the address, turned it round, and looked at the seal, and then laid it down upon the table. He heaved a long sigh, too, but it was a sigh of relief, for he had had sore misgivings as to M'Kinlay's visit, and visions of law and its dire consequences in various ways had been flitting before his eyes.

"I opine that the letter will explain the object of my coming here more briefly than I could."

"Do me the favour to tell it in words, sir," said Luttrell, coldly; and the other bowed and began.

Our reader may not be as patient a listener as was Luttrell, nor indeed, need he hear Mr. M'Kinlay's account of a mission with which he is already familiar; enough, then, if we say that he was listened to for above an hour in perfect silence, not one word of remark, not a question, not even a gesture, interrupted the flow of the narrative, and although at some moments the lawyer grew pathetic over peasant hardships and privations, and at others was jocose over their drolleries, Luttrell neither vouchsafed any show of sentiment or of mirth, but heard him throughout, as might the Chancellor have heard a pleading in Equity. Vyner had cautioned M'Kinlay not to divulge the name of the girl in whose behalf Luttrell was entreated to act, until he had given some pledge of his willingness to accept the trust. He knew well the proud susceptibility of the man, and how instantaneously he would reject what savoured of an advantage to those connected with him, not to speak of the additional pain he would feel in knowing that these peasants had been paraded as his near relatives, and so Vyner had said, "Keep the name of the girl in the background, and even when asked for it, do not appear aware of her being his connection. Leave it entirely to him to avow it or not, as he pleases. Remember," said he, as he parted with him, "you will have to treat with not only a very acute, ready-witted man, but one of the most sensitive and easily irritated temperaments in the universe."

In fact, so profuse had Vyner been of his directions, his counsels, and his warnings, that he frightened M'Kinlay considerably, impressing him with a very wholesome fear of the man he was to deal with. "I'll let him pick out the facts from the brief itself," thought he, as he handed the letter. "I'll not open the case by a speech." This clever tactic was, however, routed at once by Luttrell, as he said, "Let me hear the statement from yourself, sir. I will give it all my attention."

Thus called upon, he spoke, and, apart from those little digressionary excursions into the pathetic and the humorous, he spoke well. He owned, that though Vyner's desire to be an Irish proprietor met a certain encouragement from himself, that he looked with little favour on the other project, and less even of hope.

Indeed, of this plan, not being a father himself, he spoke less confidently. "But, after all," said he, smiling, "they are one and the other but a rich man's fancy. He can afford an unprofitable investment, and a somewhat costly experiment."

In all he said, Mr. M'Kinlay took pains to show that Sir Gervais was acting under his own judgment; that he, M'Kinlay, was a cool, calm long-headed man of the world, and only looked on these matters as a case he "was to carry," not criticize; a question he was to consign to parchment, and not ratify by an opinion.

Perhaps he was a little prolix in his excuses and exculpation, dwelling somewhat needlessly on the guarded prudence he had himself maintained throughout the affair, for Luttrell at last said, and rather abruptly, "Come to *me* now, sir. Let me hear what part is assigned to me in these matters, for assuredly I cannot guess it."

"My friend and client wishes you to be a trustee in this case; that you will act for the young girl on whom he purposes to make the settlement, and, in fact, consent to a sort of guardianship with respect to her."

Luttrell gave a smile, it was a smile of much meaning, and full of inexpressible sadness. "What a strange choice to have made," said he, mournfully. "When a captain loses a frigate, the Admiralty are usually slow to give him another; at all events, they don't pass over scores of able and fortunate officers to fix upon this one unlucky fellow, to entrust him with a new ship. Now this is precisely what your friend would do. With a large and wide acquaintance, surrounded with friends, as few men are, esteemed and loved by many, he goes out of his way to seek for one whose very name carries disaster with it. If, instead of conferring a benefit upon this poor child, he owed her a deep grudge, then, and then only, I could understand his choice of me! Do you know, sir," and here his voice became loud and full and ringing—"do you know, sir, it would be difficult to find a man who has accumulated more failures on his head than he who now stands before you, and these not from what we usually call fate, or bad luck, or misfortune, but simply and purely from an intractable temper, a nature that refused to be taught by its own hard experiences, and a certain stubborn spirit, that ever took more pleasure in breasting the flood than others took in swimming with the full tide of fortune. It takes very little knowledge of life to teach a man one lesson—which is, to avoid such men as me! They whose qualities ensure failure are truly unlucky! Tell Sir Gervais Vyner that it is not out of apathy or indolence that I refuse him, it is simply because, when he makes *me* the partner of his enterprise, it insures disaster for it."

Mr. M'Kinlay replied to this passionate outburst as lamely as men usually do to such like appeals; that is, he strung platitudes and common-places together, which, happily for him, the other never deigned to pay the slightest attention to.

One only observation did reach Luttrell's ears. It was a remark to which the speaker imparted little force; for when he made it, he had come to the end of his persuasive resources, and was in the position of those gunners who, when their ammunition is expended, charge the piece with the nearest rubbish they can lay hands upon. The remark was to this purpose: that, simple as the act seems, the choice of a trustee is one of the most puzzling things in the world, and nothing is often more embarrassing than being refused by one upon whom, without ever directly asking, we have confidently counted for that office.

Luttrell started; he suddenly bethought him of Harry. What would be more forlorn or friendless in the world than that poor boy's lot, if he were left fatherless? Except Vyner, was there one he could ask to befriend him? Indeed, whenever the contingency crossed his mind, and the thought of death presented itself full before him, he at once reverted to the hope that Vyner would not refuse this his last request. If, however, by declining what was now asked of him any coldness or estrangement ensued, he could not, of course, make this demand. "I shall have forfeited all my claim upon him," said he to himself, "if I deny him this small service, and perhaps he will not understand, and, at all events, not give any weight to the scruples I have detailed. He may say these are but the gloomy fancies of a solitary, cheerless life."—"Yes," said he, on the closing a discussion with himself, and now speaking the result aloud—"Yes. It shall be a bargain between us. Let Vyner be the guardian of my boy, and I will accept this charge; and, to show what confidence I place in his generosity, I shall accede at once; and when you get back to England, you will tell him the compact I have made with him."

"I do not feel myself in a position, Mr. Luttrell, to make a formal pledge on the part of Sir Gervais Vyner," began M'Kinlay——

"I shall not ask you, sir," broke in Luttrell, proudly; "we have been friends some five-and-twenty years, without any assistance from lawyers, and it is possible we may continue the attachment without their aid. Tell me now of this trust, for I am ashamed to say how little attention I have given the subject hitherto."

It was a pleasure to Mr. M'Kinlay to leave diplomacy, and get back again into those pleasant pasturages where duties are "recited," and obligations laid down, with all the rules of action stated, and with the rigid cautions impressed, due stress being stamped at every step on separate responsibility, and reiterated warning given, how "each acted for himself, and not one for the other," till Luttrell's less practised brain actually whirled with the repetitions and reiterations; nor was he more comforted by learning that on certain difficulties not at all improbable, arising, he would have to recur to the law courts for guidance—a gloomy prospect which all Mr. M'Kinlay's fluent readiness could not dispel, as he said, "A mere matter of form, I assure you, and only requiring a short bill in Equity, and a hearing before the Master."

"There, there, that will do," cried he, at last; "don't terrify me any more. A surgeon never made his operation less painful by describing every step of it beforehand to the patient; but, sir, I accede; and now forgive me if I leave you for one moment; I have a word to say to your fellow-traveller, whom I see out yonder."

The American was seated on a rock smoking, and Harry beside him, when Luttrell drew nigh.

"Come here, Harry," cried he to the boy; "I want to speak to you."

"Oh, papa," said the boy, as he came up, "if you only heard all the pleasant stories he has! There's nowhere he hasn't been. In countries where the trees are covered with fruit, and monkeys and peacocks all over them; in lands where there are mines of gold, and silver, and diamonds, all for the taking; in seas, too, where you look down and see great reefs that look like rocks, but are really precious stones. And now he was telling me of a beautiful island, far, far away, so rich in flowers and spices, that you can know for more than a hundred miles off when you are coming to it."

"Has he asked you to go away with him, Harry?"

"No, papa."

"But you would like to do so? Speak out, boy; tell me frankly. Do you wish it?"

"Would he take me, papa?" asked he, timidly.

"Yes."

"And would you let me?" and he spoke with even a fainter voice, and greater anxiety in his look.

"First answer me my question, Harry. Do you wish to go?"

"Yes, papa, greatly."

Luttrell turned away his head and drew his hand across his eyes, and for several minutes did not look round again. When he did, it was to see the boy standing calm, firm, and erect before him. Not a trace of emotion on his features, as his eyes confronted his own.

"I suppose you are right," said Luttrell, half speaking to himself. "I suppose you are right. It is very dreary here!"

"And there are no wild beasts to hunt, nor red men to fight, nor beautiful birds to catch, papa; nor any gold——"

"No, boy! There is not any gold assuredly. But remember, Harry, how many there are here who never saw gold, never heard of it; brave fellows, too, who are not afraid to scale the straightest cliff, nor venture out on the stormiest sea."

"And for what, papa? For a curlew's nest, or a hamper of fish; and he, yonder, tells me, that one good voyage of his barque would buy out all the islands here for ever."

"So, then, you have eaten of the apple already," cried he, with a bitter laugh. "Well, as he has tempted, he may take you. Send him to me."

The boy almost flew in his speed back, and gulping out a word or two, pointed to his father.

"Are you of the same mind, now, that you were an hour or two back? Do you wish to have that boy of mine on board your ship?" asked Luttrell.

"I'll give you a thousand dollars for him down, sir, and you shall keep the gimcracks."

"You may take him. There must be no money-dealings between us now, sir—I will sell you nothing. Come into the house with me; a very few minutes will be sufficient."

As they walked side by side towards the house, the American, with a quaint brevity, told all that Luttrell could have desired to know of him. He and his craft, the *Quincey Squash*, were well known at Liverpool and London; he was sole owner, and traded in everything, from "lumber" to Leghorn bonnets; he went everywhere, and ventured in everything; in fact, he liked an "assorted cargo of notions" better than a single freight. "I won't say he'll come back a rich man to you, sir, in five years, but you may call me a Creole if he don't know a bit of life. Just look here," said he, as he opened a pocket-map and spread it over the table, "there's ten years of my life marked out on that chart; these lines—some of 'em pretty long ones—is my voyages." Captain—for we must now give him his accustomed title — Captain Dodge spoke fluently, and vaingloriously, too, of all he had travelled, and all he had seen; of how he had traded for ivory on the Gold Coast, and for furs up at Hudson's Bay; how he had panted in the tropics, and shivered at Behring's Straits. If a little proud of his successes against Malays and Moors, it was not quite certain that he "had not done" a little mild buccaneering occasionally, when "freights were low and trade was heavy." Not that Luttrell gathered much of what he narrated, for a strange confusion was in his brain, and as he gazed at the chart and tried to follow the lines, a dimness obscured his sight, and he had to turn away and wipe his eyes.

"Wud your honour like the dinner now?" whispered Molly Ryan from the door; "the strange gentleman that was sick is dyin' of hunger."

"Yes, we're quite ready," said Luttrell; and taking a key from a nail, he betook himself to a little closet which formed his cellar. A few bottles of port, and two or three of Burgundy—remnants of a stock which once had been famous—were all that survived, but he took them forth, saying, "I am unlikely to play the host again, let us make festival for the last time."

CHAPTER XX.

THE SUPPER AT ARRAN.

With all the ardour of an Irish menial to do honour to her master's hospitality, Molly Ryan had taken the unwonted step of laying out the dinner in the "sacristy" of the Abbey, which Luttrell had once on a time intended to have converted into a grand gallery for all his rare and curious objects, and from which he soon desisted, deterred by the cost.

It was a long, narrow, vaulted chamber, with four pointed windows in one wall, and blank niches to correspond to them in the other. If in the cold unflattering light of day it would have presented an air of cheerless gloom and destitution, not so did it look now, as a great fire of turf blazed and glowed on the ample hearth, and the light of four huge pine-torches flared red from the niches, and threw a warm and mellow glare over everything; while the board was spread with an abundance which would have been utterly wasteful, if some five-and-twenty sailors and fishermen without were not to revel at second-hand, and feed on what fell from the master's table.

Luttrell had heard nothing—knew nothing of this arrangement, and when he was told in a whisper that the dinner was ready in the sacristy, his brow darkened, and his cheek flushed with anger. "We need not have starved them with cold as well as hunger," muttered he, sternly, to the woman; but she knew better than to await his reproaches, and hastened away to the kitchen.

"To you, who have seen where I live, gentlemen," said he to his guests, "it will be unnecessary to apologize for how I live; I can but say how much I regret it for *your* sakes; custom has made it easy to myself." With this he led the way along a little narrow passage, and then crossing a court-yard, entered the sacristy. If M'Kinlay and the Yankee stared with amazement at the ample preparations to regale them, and the fine old hall—for such it looked—in which they were displayed, Luttrell could scarcely master his astonishment at what he saw, and nothing short of that "dignity which doth hedge" a host as well as "a king," could have prevented him from openly expressing his surprise. Molly whispered a word in his ear, to which as hastily he said, "Certainly, of course," and just as the guests took their seats, Harry, dressed in what remained to him of his best, came forward, and stood near the table. "Sit opposite to me, Harry; the foot of the table is the fitting place for the heir of the house, is it not, Mr. M'Kinlay?"

"And is this your son, sir? is this young gentleman the—the——"

"The boy you picked up at sea," resumed Luttrell, courteously, "and who will be proud to renew his acquaintance with you more pleasantly than it opened."

"Well, young 'un, you have got a jollier colour on your cheeks now than when we saw you bobbing behind that bit of broken jib-boom! You was blue, that's a fact; but I'm a raw Eastern if you was bluer than the lawyer!"

Poor Mr. M'Kinlay! scarcely had one shame overcome him when came the terror of another; for now, for the first time, did he recognize in the Yankee the terrible tourist of the Welsh mountains. A vague something would cross him as he lay in the lugger, sea-sick and miserable, that the horrid voice, and the horrid look, and the horrid gesture of his fellow-traveller, were not encountered for the first time; but he was too full of his own sorrows to waste a thought on such speculations, and it was only now, as they sat at the same board, eating of the same dish, and hob-nobbing together, that the measure of his conviction became full. "He doesn't know—he cannot know me!"

muttered he, "and I have only one blunder to atone for; but who could have thought it was his son!" He turned to engage Harry in conversation, to inquire into his habits, his tastes, and his amusements, but the boy, fascinated by the Yankee's discourse, could not bear to lose a word of it. Dodge—"Gen'ral" he called himself, as he spoke of those days—Gen'ral Dodge had served in many of the wars of the South American Republic; he had been with Bolivar and against him; he had made and lost his fortune three successive times, had taken part in a buccaneer expedition to Mexico, was imprisoned and condemned to death, and saved by an earthquake that left the gaol and one quarter of Santa Fé in ruins. As to his shipwrecks and adventures with pirates, his hunting exploits, his raids either with Indians or against them, they were legion; and certainly to these narratives he imparted a "gusto" and an expression which gave them a marvellous power, occasionally corroborated as they were by material evidence, as when he showed where he had lost the thumb and two fingers of his left hand, the terrible cicatrix in the back of his head from an Indian's attempt to scalp him, and the mark of a bullet which had traversed his body from the neck to the opposite collar-bone. There was no disbelieving a man whose every joint and limb could come into court as his witnesses, not to say that he was one of those men whom few love to contradict. If he were, at some times, rather boastful on the score of his courage and daring, he was, at others, equally frank as to his short-comings in honesty, and he told with an astonishing frankness of some acts which, had they not been committed in unsettled and semi-civilized lands, would worthily have been requited by the galleys.

"Well, old Ramskin!" said he, addressing M'Kinlay—for while he talked he drank freely, and was already in his third bottle of Burgundy, warmed up with occasional "flashes" of brandy—"well, old Ramskin, I'd guess you'd rather be perched on a tall stool in your counting-house than up on a rock, watching for an Indian scout party; but mark me, it's all prejudice, and for my part I'd rather put a ball in a red-skin than I'd torture a white man with law and parchments." He here diversified his personal recollections by some anecdotes of lawyers, and of the esteem in which their fellow-citizens hold them "Far West," the whole winding up with a declaration that such creatures "warn't in natur," and only grew out of a rank, rotten, and stagnant condition of society, which, when only stirred by any healthy breeze of public opinion, either "left 'em or lynched 'em." He turned round for the approval of his host to this sentiment, and now saw, for the first time, that he had quitted the table.

"If you had not been so energetic in your censures of my profession, sir," said M'Kinlay, "you might have heard Mr. Luttrell asking us to excuse his absence for a few minutes while he spoke to his son."

Perhaps the American felt this rebuke as a sharp one, for he sat in silence for some minutes, when he said, "Am I to have the pleasure of your company to-night when I weigh anchor?"

"Yes; I intend to leave when you do."

"Your business is done, then?"

"It is."

"And mine, too," said the American; and each looked at the other, to see who first would divulge his secret.

"I have made arrangements for the guardianship of his son, whom, by the way, I never suspected to be the boy we picked up at sea," said M'Kinlay, thus endeavouring, by a half confidence, to obtain the whole of the American's.

"He'll not want such guardianship, I promise you, when he lives a few years with me."

"With you! What do you mean?"

"Just what I say, stranger; that he's coming aboard the *Squash*, bound now for the Isthmus; and, I repeat it, five years with Hairy Dodge will turn him out a long sight cuter than if he passed his 'prenticeship even with yourself."

"It is a strange notion of Mr. Luttrell's—a very strange notion."

The American raised himself up in his seat, and looked as if he were about to resent the speech, but he repressed the temptation, and merely said, "We're going to have lighter weather than we came over in, and a fine bright night besides."

"I hope so, with all my heart," said the other; and now each sat and sipped his wine in silence.

Leaving them thus, let us turn one moment to Luttrell, as he stood at the window of his room, with his boy beside him. There was neither lamp nor candle, but a strong moonlight streamed into the chamber, and their shadows were distinctly marked upon the floor.

"Why is Molly crying so bitterly, papa? Sure I'm not going away for ever!" said Harry.

"I hope not—I think not; but when people part some are always faint-hearted about the chances of meeting again."

"But you are not, papa?"

Luttrell did not answer for a few seconds. "Are you quite sure, Harry, that this life is what you like? I mean," said he, correcting himself quickly—"I mean, would you not rather live here till you were a man, and make Arran your home, as it is mine now?"

"No, papa. I'd like to see the countries that the Captain told of, and see some of the things he did, and then come back very rich, and build a fine castle here, and a great pier out in the sea, and have the finest cutter that ever sailed."

"But, before all this can come to pass, bethink you what a hard life is before you—what days of storm and nights of weariness. You may be hardly used, and have none to pity you—be ill, and not have one to speak kindly to you. Are you ready for all this, Harry?"

"I suppose I must bear it if I want to be a man;" and he drew himself up proudly as he spoke.

"You'll have to remember, too, sir, that you are a gentleman," said Luttrell, almost sternly; "that there are scores of mean and shabby things the fellows around may do, a Luttrell must not stoop to. Keep your word when you once pledge it; insult no man willingly; fight him who insults you; and never, if it be your fortune to command others, never say 'Go,' in a moment of danger, but 'Come.'"

"I'll not forget that," said the boy, seriously.

"Keep this purse, Harry. It was one your mother knitted, many years ago. The few guineas that are in it spend when and how you like; only remember that when gone they cannot easily be replaced by me. And now give me a kiss, for they must see us part easily."

The boy sprang into his arms, and held him fast in his embrace, while he kissed him over and over; and Luttrell parted the hair upon his forehead, kissing him tenderly there, as he muttered a few words beneath his breath.

"There, go back to them, Harry, and tell them I will join them presently."

As Harry left the room, Luttrell lighted his lamp, and sat down at his table to write. It was to Vyner he addressed himself, and intended to be as brief as might be—very little, indeed, more than the intimation that he had accepted the trust proposed to him, and begged in turn Vyner would do as much by him, and consent to be the guardian of his boy, should he be left fatherless.

"I ask this with all the more confidence," wrote he, "that your kind interest in poor Harry is so fresh in my mind, and all your generous offers to befriend him are the only cheering thoughts that occur to me in this, one of the gloomiest moments of my life.

"An American trading captain, led hither by an accident, has captivated the boy's imagination by stories of travel and adventure, and I have consented to let Harry go with him. To remain here and live as I have done was open to him; he could have succeeded me in this wild spot without the bitterness of feeling the fall that led to it; but, in the restless spirit of our race, he might some day or or other have emerged, and I dreaded to imagine what a semi-savage Luttrell would be; strong of limb, vigorous, daring, and ignorant, with pride of blood and poverty to stimulate him. What is there he might not have done in a fancied retribution against a world that had crushed his race and ruined his family—for such were the lessons he has been learning from his cradle, the only teachings he has ever had!

"The hardships of life at sea will be better training than these. The boy is very like me. I would sorrow over it, Vyner, if I did not count on that resemblance for your love to him. In one respect, however, we are not like. Harry *can* forgive an injury. Who knows, however, what he might become were he to grow up in daily contact with me? for I dreaded to mark how each year seemed to develop the Luttrell more and more in his nature. Now pride of birth with prosperity may lead to intolerance and oppression, but leash it with poverty and it will conduce to violence, perhaps to crime.

"Before the mast he will see things differently. Night-watches and hard junk are stern teachers. To rescue him from my influence, to save him from me, I send him away, and leave myself childless. I can scarcely expect that you will be able to follow me in these reasonings. How could you, happy as you are in every accident of your life, blessed in everything that gives value to existence? I feel I shall never see him again; but I feel, too, just as confidently, that at some day or other—distant it may be—you and he will meet and talk of me, speaking in love and affection, forgiving much, pitying all.

"Say nothing of this guardianship to your wife, lest it should lead her to speak of me; or, at all events, wait till I am gone. Talk of me then they may, for there is no voice so eloquent to defend as the wind that sighs through the long grass over our graves!

"I have made a will, not very formally, perhaps, but there is none likely to contest it. What a grand immunity there is in beggary! and Cane and Co. will, I apprehend, if called upon, vouch for me in that character. There are several lawsuits which have dragged on their slow course for two generations of us. I believe I myself continued the contests rather as obligations of honour than aught else. Harry was not trained with such principles, however, and I shall leave to your discretion whether our claims be abandoned or maintained.

"Last, but far from least of all, the family to which Harry's mother belonged contains many very bold, restless, and I might say dangerous, men. One of the reasons of my retirement to this lonely spot was the security I possessed in the midst of my own wild islanders against demands not always urged with moderation. They are not likely to forget the near relationship to my boy, if they can make it a source of profit; or, failing that, to convert it to a matter of menace. On every account, therefore, I entreat that he may not come back here, or, if so, but passingly.

"I hope he will never sell these islands; they would be a sorry commodity in the market, and they are the oldest possessions of our name in this kingdom. When Henry the Second sent John de Luttrell as Envoy to Rome—— but where am I straying to? The shouts that ring without tell me that all is ready for their departure, and in a few moments more I shall be alone in the world. Think of me sometimes, dear friend, even if the thought come in your happy hours to dash its joys with sadness; but do not speak of—last of all, do not write to—

"Yours, while he lives,

"JOHN HAMILTON LUTTRELL.

"I am half ashamed to add one other request; but if my cheeks grow red as I write, my heart will be the calmer when it is written. Be a friend to my boy in all ways that your kindness, your sympathy, your counsel can dictate. Guide, direct, encourage, or, if need be, reprove him; but never, whatever you do, aid him with your purse. It is on this condition alone I commit him to you. Remember!"

"They are growing impatient, papa," said the boy, entering the room half timidly. "It is nigh flood, and we shall want all the ebb to take us round the Caskets."

"And are *you* so impatient to be off, Harry?" said he, in a low soft voice; "do you wish to leave me, Harry?"

"Not if you would have me stay, papa; but I thought, I used to think at least—that—— "

"That we made but little companionship together, you would say," said Luttrell, mildly; "that we lived too much apart. Well, it is true," said he, with a deep sigh, "quite true." He paused for a moment, and then, with a sort of effort, and in a changed voice, continued, "If I should be no more here when you come back, Harry, do not let this old place fall to ruin. It has sheltered me during many a year of sorrow, and sorrow has a very attaching quality!"

"Papa, I will not go. I will not leave you!" said the boy, falling on his neck, and kissing him over and over.

"You must be manly, sir," said Luttrell, rising and disengaging himself from the boy's embrace. "When men promise, they are bound to keep their word."

The tone, the look, the gesture, full as much as the stern words themselves, recalled Harry to himself, and he drew his hand roughly across his eyes, and stepping back, stationed himself, as he was wont, to hear his father's commands.

"I have written to Sir Gervais Vyner the letter you see here, asking him to be your guardian in case I should die before your return. I have reason to hope he will not refuse me. If he accept, you will obey him in all things. You would obey me, at all events. Whenever you return to England, seek him out, and learn to know him as the last friend I had left me."

"I will, sir."

The calm and resolute tone of the boy seemed for an instant almost to overcome the father, who stood and stared steadfastly at him.

"I have told Sir Gervais," he continued, "that he will find you honourable, truthful, and brave; see that my words be borne out. And I have besought him to give you all that his friendship can bestow; but on no account—mind this, boy—on no account assist you with money. You hear me, Harry?"

"I do, sir. I will not forget your words."

"If you should have any immediate call for money, I have told your captain I will repay him for what he will advance you; be thrifty, for I have but little to live on, as you will discover one of these days when it is all your own."

"My dear sir," broke in Mr. M'Kinlay, as he bustled into the room, all coated and muffled for the journey. "Will you pardon me if I say we shall lose the tide if we delay? This young gentleman's luggage is all on board, and if there be no very urgent reason for deferring our departure, I should take it as a favour to say good-bye."

"There is nothing unreasonable in your haste, sir," said Luttrell, with a faint smile. "This is a place where few would care to dally. I have been saying a few words to my son, before he leaves me. This is the cause of your delay."

"My dear sir, I offer a thousand apologies, and beg to retire at once."

"They are all said, sir. Harry and I have nothing more of any consequence to talk over. If Sir Gervais had not been here himself, Mr. M'Kinlay, I'd have asked you to paint us somewhat less savage than we are. Oh, here comes the captain."

"I say, youngster," cried Dodge, entering, "if you ain't bent on kissin' the ugliest population I ever saw since I left the Feejees, just step out by the back of the house, and make the best of your way down to the shore. Good day, sir. You shall have news of us. Let me see; it will be a matter of six months or so. But I'll have a sharp look out after the 'buoy,' and he'll do well, you'll see. Don't you be surprised if you see him a comin' in some fine morning with a green monkey or a fur-caped baboon. Cheer up, sir! Don't let the buoy see you down-hearted," whispered he. "Come along, Harry! Be lively, my lad; out of that window, and let me find you aboard when I get down."

"Be kind to him!" muttered Luttrell, as he drew his hand hastily across his eyes.

"Lord love ye! I'm the kindest crittur that ever breathed. The whole time I was with the Choctaws, I never scalped an enemy. I couldn't bear it; and whenever I cut a fellow's head off, I turned him right round, so that I shouldn't see his face. Soft-hearted, warn't it? But that's my natur'. There, I hear them heaving short; so good-bye, for the last time."

"Harry, Harry—one word——"

"He's gone, poor fellow; don't break down his courage. Good-bye. Don't call him back."

"Be it so," said Luttrell, as he sunk down into his chair, and covered his face with his hands. For awhile all was still; then suddenly a wild cheer, a cry, in which the wail of sorrow was blended with the swell of the deep voices crying out; and Luttrell arose, and flung open his window. The lugger was under weigh. The shadow of her full canvas moved slowly along, growing fainter and fainter, at least to eyes that were now dimmed with tears; and when he turned away to wipe them she was gone.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WELCOME HOME.

To welcome Sir Gervais Vyner home, the ladies had invited Sir Within Wardle to dinner—one of those privileged little family meetings, to be of which one must be an honoured guest—and so, indeed, did the old baronet with his fine tact understand it; for he was very skilful in comprehending all those situations which make the so-to-say diplomacy of daily life.

He knew that he was admitted to that very pleasant brevet rank, the friend of the family, before whom everything can be said and talked over; and he showed by innumerable little traits how he valued his promotion, and, with a subtlety all his own, talked of himself and his own affairs with an easy confidence that seemed to say, "Here we are, all in secret committee; we may speak as freely as we like."

The dinner was a very pleasant one. Vyner gave an amusing account of his Irish experiences, spoke of everything and every one but Luttrell, for his was a name that was never mentioned amongst them. Indeed, in the wrong that the Courtenays had done him was the seal that closed their lips; for while we can talk, and talk fluently, of those who have injured us, of such as we have ourselves injured we are dumb.

Sir Within saw, with the old craft of his trade, that there was a reserve; he smelt it like a secret treaty, but it did not touch him, and he was indifferent about it. He joined with the ladies warmly in their depreciation of Ireland as a residence, and laughingly concurred in their insistance that they were never to be asked to go there.

As to the project of adopting the little peasant girl, they made it the subject of much pleasant banter; for, of course, Vyner was totally unable to reply to one-tenth of the questions which the matter suggested.

"We will suppose she is very pretty, and, what is still harder to believe, we will suppose that she'll grow up prettier, what is to come of it? what do you intend her to be?" said Georgina.

"Yes," said Sir Within, "let us look a little to what Italians call *e poi!*"

"When well brought up, and well educated, she might surely be a governess," said Lady Vyner, coming to her husband's rescue.

"And was it worth while to withdraw her from the drudgery she knew, to enter upon a slavery that she never heard of?" asked Georgina.

"To tell truth," said Vyner, "I must confess I was thinking more of the benefit to Ada, the advantage she would have in a joyous, high-spirited creature of her own age, that might make her hours of lessons more full of emulation, and her play hours pleasanter."

Sir Within bowed a courteous assent to a speech principally addressed to himself.

"And," continued Sir Gervais, bolder for this encouragement, "and as to forecasting what is to happen to any of us, even if we be alive, some ten or twelve years hence, I really own I don't think it is called for."

"I am not sure of that," said Sir Within. "I have made up my mind to live about five-and-thirty years more, and even speculated on how I am to live it."

"Do let us hear your plan," said Georgina, with a slight flush of eagerness in her face.

"I have two," said he; "and as there is not a little to be said for each, I hesitate between them."

"We cannot pretend to be of any use in counselling you, unfortunately," said Lady Vyner; "but if there be anything which what you slightingly call 'woman's wit' can add to your own reasonings, we offer it freely."

"I am deeply, infinitely gratified; your kindness is most acceptable. My first plan is one with whose details I am but too conversant. It is to live an old bachelor."

The ladies looked at each other, and then looked down. They did not very well see what was to be said, and they said nothing, though, by his silence, he seemed to expect a remark.

"Well," said Vyner, trying to break the awkward pause, "you at least know its resources, and what such a mode of life can offer."

"A good deal," resumed Sir Within. "A well cultivated selfishness has very great resources, if one has only sufficient means to indulge them. You can, what is called, live well, consult the climate that suits you, frequent the society that you like, know the people that you care to know, buy the picture, the horse, the statue that takes your fancy. You can do anything and be anything but one."

"And what is that?"

"Be happy—that is denied you! I am not, of course, speculating on any supreme bliss. I leave all these divine notions to novelists and play-writers; but I speak of that moderate share of daily contentment which we in our mundane humility call happiness; this you cannot have."

"But, if I mistake not, you have given all the ingredients of it in your late description," said Georgina.

"And the Chinese cook got all the ingredients to make a plum-pudding, but he forgot to tie the bag that held them; so is it the old bachelor's life has no completeness; it wants what the French call *l'ensemble*."

"Then why not tie the bag, Sir Within?" asked Lady Vyner, laughing.

The old diplomatist's eyes sparkled with a wicked drollery, and his mouth curved into a half-malicious smile, when Sir Gervais quietly said,—

"She means, why not marry?"

"Ah, marry;" exclaimed he, throwing up his eyebrows with an air that said, "here is a totally new field before us!" and then, as quickly recovering, he said, "Yes, certainly. There is marriage! But, somehow, I always think on this subject of a remark Charles de Rochefoucauld once made me. He said he was laid up once with an attack of gout in a château near Nancy, without a single friend or acquaintance, and, to beguile the weary hours, he used to play chess with himself, so that at last he fancied that he was very fond of the game. When he came up to Paris afterwards, he engaged a person to come every day and play with him; but to his horror he discovered that he could no longer win when he pleased, and he gave up the pursuit and never resumed it. This is, perhaps, one of the discoveries men like myself make when they marry."

"Not if they marry wisely, Sir Within," said Lady Vyner.

"I declare," broke in Georgina, hastily, "I think Sir Within is right. Telling a person to marry wisely is saying, 'Go and win that thirty thousand pounds in the lottery.'"

"At all events," said Vyner, "you'll never do it if you don't take a ticket."

"But to do that," said Lady Vyner, laughingly, "one ought to dream of a lucky number, or consult a sorceress at least."

"Ah! if you would but be the sorceress, Lady Vyner," exclaimed he, with a mingled seriousness and drollery.

"And tell you, I suppose, when you ought to venture?"

"Just so."

"Am I so certain that you would respect my divination? A prophet can't afford to be slighted."

"I promise," said he; and rising from his seat, he extended his right hand in imitation of a famous incident of the period, and exclaimed, "Je jure!"

"It is then agreed," said she, quietly, but with a slight show of humour. "If it should ever be revealed to me—intimated to my inner consciousness is the phrase, I believe—that a particular person was Heaven-sent for your especial happiness, I'll immediately go and tell you."

"And I'll marry her."

"Her consent is, of course, not in question whatever," said Georgina; "but I think so gallant a person as Sir Within might have mentioned it."

"So I should, if Lady Vyner hadn't said she was Heaven-sent. When the whole thing became destiny, it was only obedience was called for."

"You're a lucky fellow," cried Vyner, "if you're not married off before Easter. There's nothing so dangerous as giving a commission of this kind to a woman."

"Sir Within knows he can trust me he knows that I feel all the responsibility of my charge. It is very possible that I may be too exacting—too difficult——"

"I pray you do so," cried he, with much eagerness.

"Do you see how he wants to get off?" said Vyner; "like certain capricious ladies, he'd like to see all the wares in the shop, and buy nothing."

"I fancy it's pretty much what he has done already," said Georgina, in a half-whisper; but the butler put an end to the discussion by announcing that Mr. M'Kinlay had just arrived.

"Shall we go into the drawing-room?" said Georgina to her sister.

"If you like; but he'll certainly come in to tea," was the answer.

"Well, it is at least a reprieve," said she, with a dreary sigh; and they retired.

As they left by one door, Mr. M'Kinlay entered the room by the other. After a cordial greeting, Sir Gervais presented him to Sir Within, and began to question him about his journey.

"Well, Sir Gervais," said he, after a long-drawn breath, "it is no exaggeration if I say, that I have not another client in the world for whom I would undergo the same fatigues, not to say dangers."

"My friend, Mr. M'Kinlay, has been on an excursion of some peril and much hardship," said Sir Vyner to Sir Within.

"Ah? In Canada, I presume."

"No, sir," resumed M'Kinlay, "far worse—infinitely worse than Canada."

"You speak of Newfoundland, perhaps."

"Excuse me, sir, I mean Ireland, and not merely Ireland itself—though I believe a glutton in barbarism might satiate himself there—but worse again, sir—I have been over to visit some islands, wretched rocks without vegetation—well would it be could I say without inhabitants—off the west coast, and in, actually in the wild Atlantic Ocean!"

"The Arran Islands," interposed Vyner, who saw that Sir Within was doubtful of the geography.

"Yes, sir; had they called them the Barren Islands there would have been some fitness in the designation." Mr. M'Kinlay appeared the better for his very small drollery, and drank off a bumper of claret, which also seemed to do him good.

"And was the estate you wished to purchase in these wild regions?" asked Sir Within.

"No; my friend's mission to Arran was only remotely connected with the purchase. In fact, he went in search of an old friend of mine, whose assistance I needed, and whose caprice it was to retire to that desolate spot, and leave a world in which he might have made a very conspicuous figure. I am not at liberty to tell his name, though, perhaps, you might never have heard it before. M'Kinlay will, however, give us an account of his reception, and all that he saw there."

"My troubles began," said Mr. M'Kinlay, "almost immediately after we parted. You remember that on our last evening, at Westport it was, that the waiter informed me a gentleman then in the house had engaged a lugger to take him over to Innismore, the very island I wanted to reach. I commissioned the man to arrange if he could with the gentleman to accept me as a fellow-traveller. It was settled accordingly, that we were to sail with the ebb tide at eight o'clock the next morning. My first shock, on reaching the pier, was to see what they called the lugger. She was a half-decked tub! I say tub, for her whole length was certainly not double her breadth. She was tarred all over, her sails were patched, her ropes knotted, and for ballast she had some blocks of granite in a bed of shingle, which shifted even as she lay surging in the harbour. They—the sailors, I mean—answered my questions so rudely, and with so much ferocity of look and demeanour, that I was actually afraid to refuse going on board, lest they should take it as an offence, though I would willingly have given five guineas to be excused the expedition, and wait for a more responsible-looking craft. My fellow-traveller, too, a very rough-looking, and evidently seafaring man, settled the point, as, seeing my hesitation, he said, 'Well, sir, ain't the boat good enough for you? Why don't you step aboard?' The faces of the bystanders quickly decided me, and I went down the plank praying for my safety, and cursing the day I ever saw Ireland."

Our reader would possibly not thank us to follow Mr. M'Kinlay in his narrative, which, indeed, only contained sorrows common to many besides himself—the terrors of being shipwrecked added to the miseries of sea-sickness. He told how, through all his agonies, he overheard the discussions that overwhelmed him with terror, whether they could "carry" this, or "take in" that; if such a thing would "hold," or such another "give way;" and lastly, whether it were better to bear away for Cork or Bantry, or stand out to open sea, and—Heaven knows where! "Terrors that will keep me," cried he, "in nightmares for the rest of my life!

"At last—it was all that was wanting to fill the measure of my fears—I heard a sailor say, 'There! she's over at last!' 'Who's over?' cried I.

"'The fishing boat that was down to leeward, sir,' answered he. 'They're all lost.'

"'Lucky for them,' said I to myself, 'if it's over so soon.

This prolonged agony is a thousand deaths.' 'They're on the spars; I see them!' cried my fellow-traveller; 'slack off.' I forget what he said, but it was to slack off something, and run down for them. This atrocious proposal rallied me back to strength again, and I opposed it with an energy, indeed with a virulence, that actually astonished myself. I asked by what right he took the command of the lugger, and why he presumed to imperil my life—valuable to a number of people—for God knows what or whom. I vowed the most terrific consequences when we got on shore again, and declared I would have him indicted for a constructive manslaughter, if not worse. I grew bolder as I saw the sailors, fully alive to our danger, were disposed to take part with me against him, when the fellow, one of the greatest desperadoes I ever met, and, as I afterwards found out, a Yankee pirate and slaver—drew a pistol from his breast, and presented it at the helmsman, saying, 'Down your helm or I'll shoot you!' and as the man obeyed, he turned to me and said, 'If I hear another word out of your mouth, I'll put an ounce ball in you, as sure as my name is'—I think he said 'Hairy.' I believe I fainted; at least I only was aware of what was going on around me as I saw them dragging on board a half-drowned boy, with a flag in his hand, who turned out to be the son of Mr. Lut——"

"There, there, M'Kinlay," burst in Vyner, "all this agitates you far too much—don't go on, I'll not permit you. To-morrow, after a good sleep, and a hearty breakfast, I'll make you finish your story; but positively I'll not listen to another word now." The hastily thrown glance of displeasure showed the lawyer that this was a command, and he hung his head, and muttered out an awkward concurrence.

"Won't you take more wine, Sir Within?"

"No more, thank you. Your capital Bordeaux has made me already exceed my usual quantity."

"Let us ask the ladies, then, for a cup of tea," said Vyner, as he opened the door; and, as M'Kinlay passed out, he whispered, "I just caught you in time!"

The ladies received Mr. M'Kinlay with that sort of cool politeness which is cruel enough when extended to the person one sees every day, but has a touch of sarcasm in it when accorded to him who has just come off a long journey.

Now, in the larger gatherings of the world, social preferences are scarcely felt, but they can be very painful things in the small, close circle of a family party.

"You have been to Ireland, Mr. M'Kinlay—I hope you were pleased with your tour? Won't you have some tea?" said Lady Vyner, with the same amount of interest in each question.

"Mr. M'Kinlay must have proved a most amusing guest," said Georgina, in a low voice to Sir Within, "or we should have seen you in the drawing-room somewhat earlier."

"I felt it an age," said he with a little bow and a smile, intended to be of intense captivation.

"But still you remained," said she, with a sort of pique.

"*Ma foi!* What was to be done? The excellent man got into a story of his adventures, a narrative of a shipwreck which had not—as I was cruel enough to regret—befallen him, and which, I verily believe, might have lasted all night, if by some lucky chance he had not approached so near a topic of some delicacy, or reserve, that your brother-in-law closed 'the séance,' and stopped him; and to this accident I owe my freedom."

"I wonder what it could have been!"

"I cannot give you the faintest clue to it. Indeed I can't fashion to my imagination what are called family secrets—very possibly because I never had a family."

Though Georgina maintained the conversation for some time longer, keeping up that little game of meaningless remark and reply which suffices for tea-table talk, her whole mind was bent upon what could possibly be the mystery he alluded to. Taking the opportunity of a moment when Sir Within was addressing a remark to Lady Vyner, she moved half carelessly away towards the fire place, where Mr. M'Kinlay sipped his tea in solitude, Sir Gervais being deep in the columns of an evening paper.

"I suppose you are very tired, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said she; and simple as were the words, they were uttered with one of those charming smiles, that sweet captivation of look and intonation, which are the spells by which fine ladies work their miracles on lesser mortals; and, as she spoke, she seated herself on a sofa, gracefully drawing aside the folds of her ample dress, to convey the intimation that there was still place for another.

While Mr. M'Kinlay looked rather longingly at the vacant place, wondering whether he might dare to take it, a second gesture, making the seat beside her still more conspicuous, encouraged him, and he sat down, pretty much with the mixed elation and astonishment he might have felt had the Lord Chancellor invited him to a place beside him on the woolsack.

"I am so sorry not to have heard your account—the most interesting account, my brother tells me—of your late journey," began she; "and really, though the recital must bring back very acute pain, I am selfish enough to ask you to brave it."

"I am more than repaid for all, Miss Courtenay, in the kind interest you vouchsafe to bestow on me."

After which she smiled graciously, and seemed a little—a very little—flurried, as though the speech savoured of gallantry, and then, with a regained serenity, she went on, "You narrowly escaped shipwreck, I think?"

"So narrowly, that I believe every varying emotion that can herald in the sad catastrophe passed through me, and I felt every pang, except the last of all."

"How dreadful! Where did it happen?"

"Off the west coast of Ireland, Miss Courtenay. Off what mariners declare to be the most perilous lee-shore in Europe, if not in the world; and in an open boat too, at least but half decked, and on a day of such storm that, except ourselves and the unlucky yawl that was lost, not another sail was to be seen."

"And were the crew lost?"

"No; it was in saving them, as they clung to the floating spars, that we were so near perishing ourselves."

"But you *did* save them?"

"Every one. It was a daring act; so daring that, landsman as I was, I deemed it almost foolhardy. Indeed, our crew at first resisted, and wouldn't do it."

"It was nobly done, be assured, Mr. M'Kinlay; these are occasions well bought at all their cost of danger. Not only is a man higher for them in his own esteem, but that to all who know him, who respect, who——" She hesitated, and, in a flurried sort of way, suddenly said, "And where did you land them?"

"We landed them on the island," said he, with an almost triumphant air—"we brought them back to their own homes—dreary enough in all conscience; but they never knew better."

"How is the place called?"

"Innishmore, the most northern of the Arran Islands," said he, in a whisper, and looking uneasily over at Sir Gervais, to see that he was not overheard.

"Is the place interesting, or picturesque, or are there any objects of interest?" said she, carelessly, and to let him recover his former composure.

"None whatever," continued he, in the same cautious voice; "mere barbarism, and such poverty as I never witnessed before. In the house where we were received—the only thing worthy the name of a house in the place—the few articles of furniture were made of the remnants thrown on shore from shipwrecks; and we had on the dinner-table earthenware pipkins, tin cups, glasses, and wooden measures indiscriminately. While as if to heighten the incongruity, a flagon of silver, which had once been gilt too, figured in the midst, and displayed a very strange crest—a heart rent in two, with the motto *La Lutte réelle*, a heraldic version of the name."

"Luttrell!" whispered she, still lower. "What is his Christian name?"

"John Hamilton. But, my dear Miss Courtenay, where have you been leading me all this time? These are all secrets; at least Sir Gervais enjoined me especially not to speak of where I had been, nor with whom. I am aware it was out of respect for the feelings of this unfortunate man, who, however little trace there remained of it, has once been a gentleman and a man of some fortune."

"If you never tell my brother that you have revealed this to me, I promise you I'll not speak of it," said she; and with all her effort to appear calm, her agitation nearly overcame her.

"You may depend upon *me*, Miss Courtenay."

"Nor to my sister," muttered she, still dwelling on her own thoughts.

"Certainly not. It was a great indiscretion—that is, it would have been a great indiscretion to have mentioned this to any one less—less——"

While he was searching his brain for an epithet, she arose and walked to a window, and Mr. M'Kinlay, rather shocked at his own impetuous frankness, sat thinking over all that he had said.

"Come, Sir Within," cried Vyner, "here's my friend M'Kinlay, a capital whist player. What say you to a rubber? and Georgina, will you join us?"

"Not to-night, Gervais. Laura will take my place."

Lady Vyner acceded good naturedly, with many excuses for all her ignorance of the game, and while Sir Within and Vyner held a little amicable contest for her as a partner, Georgina drew again nigh to where M'Kinlay was standing.

"Did he look very old and broken?" asked she, in a low but shaken voice.

"Terribly broken."

"What age would you guess him to be?"

"Fifty-four, or five; perhaps older."

"Absurd!" cried she, peevishly; "he's not forty."

"I spoke of what he seemed to be; his hair is perfectly white, he stoops considerably, and looks, in fact the remains of a shattered, broken man, who never at any time was a strong one."

An insolent curl moved her mouth, but she bit her lips, and with an effort said, "Did you see his wife?"

"He is a widower; except the little boy that we rescued from the wreck, he has none belonging to him."

"Come along, M'Kinlay, we are waiting for you," cried Sir Gervais; and the lawyer moved away, while Georgina, with a motion of her finger to her lips, to enjoin secrecy, turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME WORDS AT PARTING.

It was as the Vyners sat at breakfast the following morning, that the servant announced the arrival of an old countryman and a little girl, who had just come by the stage.

"Oh! may I go, papa, may I go and see her?" cried Ada, eagerly; but Sir Gervais had stooped across to whisper something to his wife, and the governess, deeming the moment favourable to exert her authority, moved away at once with her charge.

"The peasant child that we told you of, Sir Within," said Lady Vyner, "has arrived, and it is a rare piece of fortune you are here, for we shall steal a travelling opinion out of you."

"In what way may I hope to be of use?"

"In telling us what you think of her. I mean, of her temper, character, disposition; in short, how you, with that great tact you possess in reading people, interpret her."

"You flatter me much, Lady Vyner; but any skill I may possess in these respects is rather applicable to people in our own rank of life, where conventionalities have a great share, now in hiding, now in disclosing traits of character. As to the simple child of nature, I suspect I shall find myself all at fault."

"But you are a phrenologist, too?" said Sir Gervais.

"A believer, certainly, but no accomplished professor of the science."

"I declare it is very nervous work to be in company with a magician, who reads one like an open volume," said Georgina. "What do you say, Mr. M'Kinlay, if we take a walk in the garden, while these learned chemists perform their analyses?"

Mr. M'Kinlay's eyes sparkled with delight, though he had to stammer out his excuses: He was going to start off for town; he must meet the "up mail" somewhere, and his conveyance was already waiting at the gate.

"Then I'll stroll down the avenue with you," said she, rising. "I'll go for my bonnet."

"Let me have the draft as early as you can, M'Kinlay," whispered Sir Gervais, as he drew the lawyer into a window-recess. "I don't think Luttrell will like acting with Grenfell, and I would ask my friend, Sir Within here, to be the other trustee."

"No; he certainly did not seem to like Grenfell, though he owned he did not know him."

"Then as to his own boy, I'll write to him myself; it will be more friendly. Of course, all these matters are between ourselves."

"Of course."

"I mean strictly so; because Lady Vyner's family and the Luttrells have had some differences, years and years ago. Too long a story to tell you now, and scarcely worth telling at any time; however, it was one of those unfinished games—you understand—where each party accuses the other of unfair play, and there are no quarrels less reparable. I say this much simply to show you the need of all your caution, and how the name 'Luttrell' must never escape you."

Mr. M'Kinlay would like to have declared at once that the imprudence had been committed, and that the warning had come too late; but it required more time than he then had at his disposal to show by what a mere slip it had occurred, and at the same time how innocuously the tidings had fallen. Lastly, there was his pride as a business man in the way—the same sort of infallibility which makes popes and bank cashiers a little less and more than all humanity—so he simply bowed and smiled, and muttered a something that implied a perfect acquiescence. And now he took his leave, Lady Vyner graciously hoping soon to see him again; and Sir Within, with a courtesy that had often delighted arch-duchesses, declaring the infinite pleasure it would afford him to see him at Dalradern, with which successes triumphant, he shook Vyner's hand, and hastened out to meet Miss Courtenay.

It is a very strange thing to mark how certain men, trained and inured to emergencies of no mean order—the lawyer and the doctor, for instance—who can await with unshaken courage the moment in which duty will summon them to efforts on whose issue another's life is hanging,—I say, it is a strange thing to mark how such men are unnerved and flurried by that small by-play of society which fine ladies go through without a sensation or an emotion. The little common-place attentions, the weak flatteries, the small coquetries that are the every-day incidents of such a sphere, strike them as all full of a direct application, a peculiar significancy, when addressed to themselves; and thus was it Mr. M'Kinlay issued forth, imbued with a strong conviction that he had just taken leave of a charming family, endowed with many graceful gifts, amongst which conspicuously shone the discernment they showed in understanding himself.

"I see it," muttered he, below his breath—"I see it before me. There will come a day when I shall cross this threshold on still safer ground. When Sir Gervais will be Vyner, and even——"

"I trust I have not kept you waiting?" said the very sweetest of voices, as Miss Courtenay, drawing her shawl around her, came forward. "I sincerely hope I have not perilled your journey; but I went to fetch you a rose. Here it is. Is it not pretty? They are the true Japanese roses, but they have no odour."

Mr. M'Kinlay was in ecstacy; he declared that the flower was perfection; there never was such grace of outline, such delicacy of colouring, such elegance of form; and he protested that there was a faint, a very faint, but delicious perfume also.

Georgina laughed, one of those sweet-ringing little laughs beauties practise—just as great pianists do those seemingly hap-hazard chords they throw off, as in careless mood they find themselves before a piano—and they now walked along, side by side towards the gate.

"You don't know in what a position of difficulty my indiscretion of yesterday evening has placed me, Miss Courtenay,' said he. "Here has been Sir Gervais enjoining me to the strictest secrecy."

"You may trust me to the fullest extent; and tell me, what was your business with Luttrell?"

"You shall know all. Indeed, I have no desire to keep secrets from you." It was somewhat of a hazardous speech, particularly in the way it was uttered; but she received it with a very sweet smile, and he went on, "My journey had for its object to see this Mr. Luttrell, and induce him to accept a trusteeship to a deed."

"For this child?"

"Yes; the same."

"But she is his daughter, is she not?"

"No; he had but one child, the boy I spoke of."

"Who told you so? Luttrell himself, perhaps, or some of his people. At all events, do you believe it?"

He was a good deal startled by the sharp, quick, peremptory tone she now spoke in, so like her wonted manner, but so widely unlike her late mood of captivating softness, and for a second or two he did not answer.

"Tell me frankly, do you believe it?" cried she.

"I see no reason to disbelieve it," was his reply.

"Is the boy older than this girl?" asked she, quickly.

"I should say so. Yes, certainly. I think so, at least."

"And I am almost as certain he is not," said she, in the same determined tone. "Now for another point. My brother Vyner is about to make a settlement on this girl, is it not so?"

"Yes; I have instructions to prepare a deed."

"And do you believe—is it a thing that your experience warrants you to believe—that he contemplates this for the child of Heaven knows whom, found Heaven knows where? Tell me that!"

"It is strange, no doubt, and it surprised me greatly, and at first I couldn't credit it."

"Nor you don't now! No, no, Mr. M'Kinlay, don't be a churl of your confidence. This girl is a Luttrell; confess it?"

"On my honour, I believe she is not."

"Then I take it they are cleverer folk than I thought them, for they seem to have deceived you."

"We shall not do it, sir, in the time," cried the postilion from his saddle, "unless we start at once."

"Yes, yes, I am coming. If you would write to me, Miss Courtenay, any of your doubts—if you would allow me to write to you."

"What for, sir? I have no doubts. I don't certainly see how all this came about; nor—not having Mr. Grenfell's acquaintance, who was with my brother—am I likely to find out; but I know quite as much as I care to know."

"You suspect—I see what you suspect," said Mr. M'Kinlay, hoping by one clever dash to achieve the full measure of her confidence.

"What is it I suspect?" asked she, with an air of innocent curiosity.

"You suspect," said he, slowly, while he looked intently into her eyes at the time—"you suspect that Sir Gervais means by adopting this child to make some sort of reparation to Luttrell."

"A what, sir?" said she, opening her eyes to almost twice the usual size, while her nostrils dilated with passion. "What did you dare to mean by that word?"

"My dear Miss Courtenay, I am miserable, the most wretched of men, if I have offended you."

"There's eleven now striking, sir, and we may as well send the horses back," cried the postilion, sulkily.

"There, sir, you hear what he says; pray don't be late on my account. Good-bye. I hope you'll have no more disasters. Good-bye."

For a moment he thought to hasten after her, and try to make his peace; but great interests called him back to town, and, besides, he might in his confusion only make bad worse. It was a matter of much thought, and so, with a deep sigh, he stepped into the chaise and drove away, with a far heavier heart than he had carried from the porch of the cottage.

"I must have called a wrong witness," muttered he, "there's no doubt of it; *she* belonged to 'the other side.'"

CHAPTER XXIII.

MALONE IN GOOD COMPANY.

When Georgina returned to the drawing-room, she found her sister seated on a sofa, with Sir Within beside her, and in front of them stood a girl, whose appearance certainly answered ill to the high-flown descriptions Sir Gervais had given them of her beauty.

With the evident intention of making a favourable first impression, her grandfather had dressed her up in some faded relics of Mrs. Luttrell's wardrobe; a blue silk dress, flounced and trimmed, reaching to her feet, while a bonnet of some extinct shape shadowed her face and concealed her hair, and a pair of satin boots, so large that they curved up, Turkish fashion, towards the toes, gave her the look rather of some wandering circus performer, than of a peasant child.

"Je la trouve affreusement laide!" said Lady Vyner, as her sister came forward and examined her with a quiet and steady stare through her eyeglass.

"She is certainly nothing like the sketch he made, and still less like the description he gave of her," said Georgina, in French. "What do you say, Sir Within?"

"There is something—not exactly beauty—about her," said he, in the same language, "but something that, cultivated and developed, might possibly be attractive. Her eyes have a strange colour in them: they are grey, but they are of that grey that gets a tinge of amethyst when excited."

While they thus spoke, the girl had turned from one to the other, listening attentively, and as eagerly watching the expressions of the listeners' faces, to gather what she might of their meaning

"Your name is Kitty—Kitty O'Hara, I think?" said Lady Vyner. "A very good name, too, is O'Hara!"

"Yes, my lady. There is an O'Hara lives at Craig-na-Manna, in his own castle."

"Are you related to him?" asked Georgina, gravely.

"No, my lady."

"Distantly, perhaps, you might be?"

"Perhaps we might; at all events, he never said so!"

"And you think, probably, it was more for him to own the relationship than for you to claim it?"

The girl was silent, and looked thoughtful; and Lady Viner said, "I don't think she understood you, Georgy?"

"Yes I did, my lady; but I didn't know what to say?"

"At all events," said Georgina, "you don't call each other cousins."

The child nodded.

"And yet, Kitty, if I don't mistake greatly, you'd like well enough to have some grand relations—fine, rich people, living in their own great castle?"

"Yes, I'd like that!" said the girl. And her cheeks glowed, while her eyes deepened into the colour the old baronet described.

"And if we were to be to you as these same cousins, Kitty," said Lady Viner, good-naturedly, "do you think you could love us, and be happy with us?"

The girl turned her head and surveyed the room with a quiet leisurely look, and, though it was full of objects new and strange, she did not let her gaze dwell too long on any one in particular; and in a quiet steady tone, said, "I'd like to live here!"

"Yes: but you have only answered half of her ladyship's question," said Sir Within. "She asked, could you love her?'"

The girl turned her eyes full on Georgina, and, after a steady stare, she looked in Lady Vyner's face, and said, "I could love *you!*" The emphasis plainly indicating what she meant.

"I think there can be very little mistake there," said Georgina, in French. "I at least have not captivated her at first sight."

"Ma foi, she is more savage than I thought her," said Sir Within, in the same language.

"No," said she, quickly catching at the sound of the word, "I am not a savage!" And there was a fierce energy in the way she spoke actually startling.

"My dear child," said he, gently, "I did not call you so."

"And if he had," interposed Miss Courtenay, "gentlemen are not accustomed to be rebuked by such as you!"

The girl's face grew scarlet; she clenched her hands together, and the joints cracked as the fingers strained and twisted in her grasp.

"You have much to learn, Kitty," said Lady Vyner; "but if you are a good child, gentle and obedient, we will try and teach you."

The child curtseyed her thanks.

"Take off that odious bonnet, Georgy, and let us see her better."

The girl stared with amazement at hearing her head-dress so criticized, and followed it with her eyes wistfully.

"Yes; she is much better now."

"What splendid hair!" said Sir Within, in French.

"You have got pretty hair, he says," said Georgina.

"This is prettier," said the child, as she lifted the amber beads of her necklace and displayed them proudly.

"They are very pretty too, and real amber."

"Amber and gold," said the girl, proudly.

"Now she looks like the picture of her," said Lady Vyner, in French; "she positively is pretty. The horrid dress disfigured her altogether."

Sir Gervais entered the room hastily at this moment, and whispered a few words in his wife's ear, concluding aloud: "Let her go to Ada; she is in the garden. You can go this way Kitty," said he, opening one of the French windows; "cross over the grass to that little wooden gate yonder, and the path will bring you to the garden. You'll find a young lady there who would like to know you."

"May I have my bonnet?" asked she, wistfully.

"No; go without it. You'll be freer!"

"I must ask you to let me show you this old man. He has submitted me to a cross-examination so sharp and searching for the last half-hour, that I really want a little rest."

Whatever absurdity the pretension of dress had thrown around the girl, nothing of the same kind was observable in the appearance of the old man, who, in his long coat of bluish grey frieze, and with his snow-white hair falling on his shoulders, stood before them. His air, too, was thoroughly respectful; but neither abashed by the presence in which he found himself, nor, stranger still for an Irish peasant, at all excited to any show of curiosity by the rich objects about.

"Well, Malone," said Vyner, with the frank familiar tone that so well became him, "I believe we have now gone over everything that we have to say to each other, and, at all events, as you will stop here to-day——"

"No, your honour; with your honour's leave, I'll go off now.

It's best for the child, and, indeed, for myself!" And a heavy sigh followed the last word.

"You are afraid, then, she will fret after you," said Georgina, fixing a full and steady gaze on the old man's face.

"She might, my lady," said he, calmly.

"Nothing more natural; who would blame her?" broke in Lady Vyner. "But might it not be as well for you to wait and see how she likes her new life here?"

"She is sure to like it, my lady."

"I suspect she is!" said Georgina, quickly. And the old man turned and looked at her with a keen, sharp glance; it almost seemed to ask, "How do you know this!"

Vyner broke the somewhat awkward pause that ensued by saying, "As I shall be your landlord, Malone, in a few days, you will have many opportunities of communicating with me, and I am sure, until your granddaughter can write with her own hand, either of these ladies will be kind enough to send you news of her."

The old man made a gesture of gratitude, and stood still without speaking. At length he sighed deeply, and seemed engaged in some process of recollection, for he counted over to himself something, marking each event on his fingers.

"I do think, Malone," said Vyner, with much kindness of voice and manner, "it would be well to remain here to-day at least. You yourself will go back more satisfied as you see in what sort of place and with what people you have left your child."

"No, thank your honour; I'll go this morning. It is best. There's only one thing more I have to say, but to be sure it's the great one of all."

"Then it is a matter of money," said Georgina, in a low tone; but low as it was the old fellow, who often affected deafness, caught it at once, and with a look of great resentment fixed his eyes on her.

"I half suspect," said Vyner, "we have not forgotten anything. I have told you how she will be treated and looked on, how educated and cared for."

"And how dressed," added Lady Vyner.

"I have, so far as I know, too, provided for the contingency of her wishing to return home again, or for such a wish on the part of her friends; and I have satisfied you that her opinions in matters of religion shall be respected, and that she shall have, whenever it is possible, the advantage of conferring with a priest of her own Church. Now, do you remember anything else we ought to take into account."

"Yes, your honour," said the old man, resolutely. "I want to know, if it was to happen, from any rayson, that your honour or the ladies wished to send her back again, after she was, maybe, two years or three years here, when she was accustomed to be treated like a lady, and felt like one—I want to know where she's to go, or who to ?"

"There is much good sense in that question," said Sir Within, in French; and he now arose to look closer at the old countryman.

"I think, Malone, we have already provided for that."

"No, your honour. You said how it would be if Kitty wanted to go back herself, or if I sent for her; and how, too, it would be if, when she was grown up and fit to be married, that she ought to have consent from your honour, or the guardians that your honour wud give her in charge to. But now I want to know how it would be if, after the child was used to fine ways of livin', she was to be sent away—without any fault of hers, maybe, but just because—no matter for what rayson"—here his eyes glanced rapidly at Georgina—"I'd like to ax, what's to become of her then ?"

"I scarcely think we can go so far as to provide for every casualty in life; but it will perhaps satisfy you to know that she'll have two guardians to watch over her interests. One of them is this gentleman here."

"And who's the other ?" asked Malone, curiously.

"The other ? The other is not yet formally declared, but you will be fully satisfied with him, that much I guarantee."

Malone did not give much attention to this speech, his whole interest seeming now to concentrate in the person of him who was to be the girl's guardian.

"Is your honour married ?" asked he at length of Sir Within.

"I have not the happiness," said the old diplomatist, with a grace of manner that he might have displayed to a sovereign.

"There it is again," sighed Malone; "she'll have nowhere to go to if she's turned out. Has his honour a house near this ?"

"Yes. I shall be happy to show it to you," said Sir Within, politely.

"I declare, Malone, if I'm ever in want of a guardian I'll look you up. I never heard of your equal in foresight," said Georgina, laughing.

"Wouldn't I need to be, my lady ? Who has the child to look to barrin' myself ? And maybe, then she wouldn't have even me. I'm seventy-eight last April; and his honour there isn't very young either."

"Trop vrai, ma foi," said Sir Within, trying to laugh gaily, but reddening to his forehead as he turned away.

"You must have more patience than I, Gervais, to prolong this discussion," said Georgina, angrily. "I vow I'd anticipate the old man's objection, and pack them off both together this very morning."

Every syllable of this was overheard by Malone, though he affected not to hear it, and stood a perfect picture of immobility.

Sir Gervais, who up to this was rather amused by the casuistical turn of the peasant's mind, now seemed rather to lose temper, and said, "Such an arrangement as we contemplated, Malone, requires a little exercise of good faith on both sides; if you believe that you cannot extend that trust in us so far as we expect from you, I really think the best and easiest way would be to do as this young lady says—end our contract at once."

Not in the least startled by the peremptory tone which Vyner had now for the first time used towards him, the old man folded his hands with an air of resignation, and stood without uttering a word.

"Did you hear what Sir Gervais said to you?" asked Georgina, after a pause of some seconds.

"Yes, my lady."

"And what answer have you to make?" asked she again, more imperatively.

"'Tis your ladyship is right," began Malone, in a voice greatly subdued, and with almost a slight wining intonation through it; "'tis your ladyship is right. His honour is too good and too patient with me. But what am I but a poor ignorant labourin' man, that never had any edication nor larnin' at all? And if I be thinking of more than I ought, it's because I know no better."

"Well, what will you do?" said Vyner, hastily, for there was a servility in the man's manner that revolted him, and he was impatient to conclude.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, if your honour lets me," said Malone, resolutely, "I'll go and speak to Kitty. She's cute enough, young as she is, and whatever she says I'll abide by."

"Do so; take your own way altogether, my good man; and be assured that whichever decision you come to will not in any degree affect our future dealings together."

"That is, your honour won't turn me out of my houldin'."

"Nothing of the kind."

"He never suspected you would," said Georgina, but in a very cautious whisper, which this time escaped Malone.

"I'll not be ten minutes, your honour," said he, as he moved towards the door.

"Take as much time as you please."

"He'll not part with her, I see that," said Lady Vyner, as the man withdrew.

Georgina gave a saucy laugh, and said, "He never so much as dreamed of taking her away; his whole mind was bent upon a hard bargain; and now that he has got the best terms he could, he'll close the contract."

"You don't believe too implicitly in humanity," said Sir Within, smiling.

"I believe in men only when they are gentlemen," said she; and there was a very gracious glance as she spoke, which totally effaced all unpleasant memory of the past.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A QUIET TALK IN A GARDEN.

Much as the magnificence and comfort indoors had astonished Malone, he was far more captivated by the beauty of the garden. Here were a vast variety of objects which he could thoroughly appreciate. The luxuriant vegetation, the fruit-trees bending under their fruit, the profusion of rare and rich flowers, the trim order of the whole, that neatness which the inexperienced eye has seldom beheld, nor can, even when seeing, credit, struck him at every step; and then there were plants utterly new and strange to him—pines and pomegranates, and enormous gourds, streaked and variegated in gorgeous colours, and over and through all a certain pervading odour that distilled a sense of drowsy enjoyment very captivating. Never, perhaps, in his whole life, had he so fully brought home to him the glorious prerogative of wealth, that marvellous power that culls from life, one by one, every attribute that is pleasure-giving, and surrounds daily existence with whatever can charm or beguile.

When he heard from the gardener that Sir Gervais seldom or never came there, he almost started, and some vague and shadowy doubt shot across his mind that rich men might not be so triumphantly blessed as he had just believed them.

"Sure," he muttered, "if he doesn't see this he can't enjoy it, and if he sees it so often that he doesn't mind, it's the same thing. I wondher, now, would that be possible, and would there ever come a time to myself when I wouldn't think this was Paradise."

He was musing in this wise, when a merry burst of childish laughter startled him, and at the same instant a little girl bounded over a melon-frame and ran towards him. He drew aside, and took off his hat with respectful deference, when suddenly the child stopped, and burst into a ringing laugh, as she said,—

"Why, grandfather, don't you know me?"

Nor even then did he know her, such a marvellous change had been wrought in her by one of Ada's dresses, and a blue ribbon that fastened her hair behind, and fell floating down her back with the rich golden tresses.

"Sure it isn't Kitty?" cried he, shading his eyes with his hand.

"And why wouldn't it be Kitty?" replied she tartly, and piqued that her own attractions were not above all adventitious aid. "Is it a white frock makes me so grand that ye wouldn't know me again?"

"May I never," cried he, "but I thought you was a young lady."

"Well, and what's the differ, I wonder? If I look like one, couldn't I be one?"

"Ay, and do it well, too!" said he, while his eyes glistened with a look of triumph. "Come here, Kitty darlin'," said he, taking her hand and leading her along at his side, "I want to spake a word to you. Now, Kitty, though you're only a child, as one may say, you've more wit in your head nor many a grown woman, and if you hadn't, it's the heavy heart I'd have this day leavin' you among strangers."

"Don't fret about that, grandfather; it's an elegant fine place to be in. Wait till I show you the dairy, that's grander inside than ever I seen a house in Ireland; and if you saw the cow-house, the beasts has straps with buckles round their necks, and boords under their feet, just like Christians only betther."

"A long sight betther nor Christians!" muttered he, half savagely. Then recovering, he went on: "You see, here's how it is. 'Twas out of a 'conceit'—a sort of fancy—they took you, and out of the same, my honey, they may leave you some fine mornin' when you have got ways that would be hard to give up, and used to twenty things you couldn't do without; and I was tellin' them that, and askin' how it would be if that day was to come?"

"Ah," cried she, with an impatient toss of the head, "I wish you hadn't put such thoughts into their heads at all. Sure, ain't I here now? Haven't they tuk me away from my home, and where would I go if they turned me out? You want to make it asy for them, grandfather, isn't that it?"

"Faix, I believe you're right, Kitty."

"Sure, I know I am. And why would they send me away if I didn't displease them, and you'll see that I'll not do that."

"Are you sure and certain of that?"

"As sure as I'm here. Don't fret about it, grandfather."

"Ay, but darlin', what will plase one wouldn't, may be, be plasin' to another; there's the mistress and her sister—and they're not a bit like each other—and there's the master and that ould man with the goold chain round his neck—he's your guardian."

"Oh, is he?" cried she. "See what he gave me—he took it off his watch-chain. He said, 'There's a little sweetheart for you.'" And she drew from her bosom her handkerchief, in which she had carefully rolled up a small figure of a man in armour, of fine gold and delicate workmanship. "And the little girl here—Ada, they call her—tells me that he is far richer than her papa, and has a house ten times grander."

"That's lucky, anyhow," said the old man, musing. "Well, honey, when I found that I couldn't do any better, I said I'd go and talk to yourself, and see whether you were set upon stayin' with all your heart, or if you'd like to go back again."

"Is it back to Derryvaragh?"

"Yes; where else?"

"Catch me at it, Peter Malone, that's all! Catch me goin' to eat potatoes and lie on straw, work in the fields and go barefoot, when I can be a lady, and have everything I can think of."

"I wonder will ye ever larn it?"

"Larn what?"

"To be a lady—I mean a raal lady—that nobody, no matter how cute they were, could find you out."

"Give me two years, Peter Malone, just two years—maybe not so much, but I'd like to be sure—and if I don't, I'll promise you to go back to Derryvaragh, and never lave it again."

"Faix, I think you'd win!"

"Sure, I know it."

And there was a fierce energy in her look that said far more than her words.

"Oh, Kitty, darlin', I wondher will I live to see it?"

Apparently, this consummation was not that which held chief sway over her mind, for she was now busy making a wreath of flowers for her head.

"Won't the gardener be angry, darlin', at your pluckin' the roses and the big pinks?"

"Let him, if he dare. Miss Ada told him awhile ago that I was to go everywhere, and take anything just like herself; and I can eat the fruit, the apples, and the pears, and the grapes that you see there, but I wouldn't because Ada didn't," said she, gravely.

"You'll do, Kitty—you'll do," said the old man; and his eyes swam with tears of affection and joy.

"You begin to think so now, grandfather," said she, archly.

"And so I may go in now and tell them that you'll stay."

"You may go in, Peter Malone, and tell them that I won't go, and that's better."

The old man stepped back, and turning her round full in front of him, stood in wondering admiration of her for some seconds.

"Well?" said she, pertly, as if interrogating his opinion of her—"well?"

But his emotion was too strong for words, and the heavy tears coursed after each other down his wrinkled cheeks.

"It's harder for me to leave you, Kitty darlin', than I thought it would be, and I know, too, I'll feel it worse when I go back."

"No you won't, grandfather," said she, caressingly. "You'll be thinking of me and the fine life I'm leadin' here, and the fine times that's before me."

"Do you think so, honey?" asked he, in a half-sobbing tone—"do you think so?"

"I know it, grandfather—I know it, so don't cry any more; and, whenever your heart is low, just think of what's coming. That's what I do. I always begin to think of what's coming!"

"And when that time comes, Kitty, 'Alannah,' will you ever remimber yer ould grandfather, who won't be to 'the fore' to see it?"

"And why won't he be?"

"Because, darlin,' I'm nigh eighty years of age, and I can't expect to see above a year or two, at farthest. Come here and give me a kiss, ma Cushleen! and cut off a bit of your hair for me to have as a keepsake, and put next my heart in my coffin."

"No, grandfather; take this, it will do as well"—and she handed him the little golden trinket—"for I can't cut my hair after hearin' the gentleman sayin' how beautiful it is!"

The old man, however, motioned away the gift with one hand, while he drew the other across his eyes.

"Is there anything you think of now, Kitty?" said he, with an effort to appear calm, "for I must be goin'."

"Give my love to them all beyant," said she, gravely, "and say if there's a thing I could do for them, I'll do it, but don't let them be comin' after me!"

A sickly paleness spread over the old man's face, and his lips trembled as he muttered, "No fear of that! They'll not trouble you! Good-bye!" And he stooped and kissed her.

When he had walked a few paces away, he turned, and, with his hands fervently clasped above his head, uttered a blessing in Irish.

"God speed you, grandfather, and send you safe home!" cried she, and, skipping over a flower-bed, was lost to his view, though he could hear her happy voice as she went away singing.

"The devil a doubt of it," muttered the old man, "them's the ones that bate the world; and if she doesn't come in first in the race, by my soule it isn't the weight of her heart will keep her back!"

"Well, Malone!" cried Sir Gervais, as they met at the garden-gate, "have you been able to make up your mind?"

"Yes, your honour; Kitty says she'll stay."

Sir Gervais paused for a moment, then said,—

"Because we have been talking the matter over amongst ourselves, Malone, and we have thought that, as possibly your expectations might be greater than were likely to be realized, our best way might be to make you some compensation for the trouble we have given you, and part the same good friends that we met. I therefore came to say, that if you like your present holding, that little farm——"

"No, your honour, no," broke he in, eagerly; "her heart's in the place now, and it would be as much as her life is worth to tear her away from it."

"If that be so, there's no more to be said; but remember that we gave you a choice and you took it."

"What does he mean to do?" asked Georgina, as she now came up the path.

"To leave her here," answered Vyner.

"Of course. I never had a doubt of it. My good man, I'm much mistaken if your granddaughter and I will not understand each other very quickly. What do you think?"

"It is little trouble it will give your ladyship to know all that's inside a poor ignorant little child like that!" said he, with an intense servility of manner. "But her heart is true and her conscience clean, and I'm lavin' you as good a child as ever broke bread this day!"

"So that if the tree doesn't bear the fruit it ought, the blame will lie with the gardener; isn't that what you mean?" asked she, keenly.

"God help me! I'm only a poor man, and your ladyship is too hard on me," said he, uncovering his snow-white head, and bowing deeply and humbly.

"After all," whispered she, in Vyner's ear, "there has really been nothing determined about the matter in dispute. None of us know what is to be done, if the contingency he spoke of should arise."

They walked away arm in arm, in close conference together, but when they returned, after a half-hour or so, to the place, Malone was gone. The porter said he had come to the lodge for his bundle, wished him a good-bye, and departed.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TWO PUPILS.

DAYS went over, and the time arrived for the Vyners to leave their Welsh cottage and take up their abode for the winter in their more commodious old family house, when a letter came from Rome stating that Lady Vyner's mother, Mrs. Courtenay, was very ill there, and begging to see her daughters as soon as might be.

After considerable debate, it was resolved that the children should be left behind with the governess, Sir Within pledging himself to watch over them most attentively, and send constant reports of Ada to her family. Mademoiselle Heinzleman had already spoken very favourably of Kitty, or Kate, as she was henceforth to be called; not only of her disposition and temper, but of her capacity and her intense desire to learn, and the Vyners now deemed her presence a most fortunate event. Nor were they so far wrong. Ada was in every quality of gentleness and obedience all that the most anxious love could ask; she had the traits—very distinctive traits are they, too—of those who have been from earliest infancy only conversant with one school of manners, and that the best. All the examples she had seen were such as teach habits of deference, the wish to oblige, the readiness to postpone self-interest, and a general disposition to please without obtrusiveness—ways which spread a very enjoyable atmosphere over daily life, and gild the current of existence to those with whom the stream runs smoothly.

She was a very pretty child, too. She had eyes of deep blue, which seemed deeper for their long black lashes; her hair was of that rich auburn which sets off a fair skin to greatest advantage; her profile was almost faultless in regularity, and so would have been her full face if an over-shortness of the upper lip had not marred the effect by giving a habit of slightly separating the lips when silent, and thus imparting a look of weakness to her features which the well-formed brow and forehead contradicted.

She was clever, but more timid than clever, and with such a distrust of her ability as to make her abashed at the slightest demand upon it. This timidity had been deepened by solitude —she being an only child—into something like melancholy, and her temperament when Kate O'Hara first came was certainly sad-coloured.

It was like the working of a charm, the change which now came over her whole nature. Not merely that emulation had taken the place of indolence, and zeal usurped the post of apathy, but she became active, lively, and energetic. The occupations which had used to weary became interesting, and instead of the lassitude that had weighed her down she seemed to feel a zest and enjoyment in the mere fact of existence. And it is probably the very nearest approach to happiness of which our life here below is capable, when the sunshine of the outer world is felt within our own hearts, and we are glad with the gladness of all around us.

Mademoiselle Heinzleman's great test of all goodness was assiduity. In her appreciation all the cardinal virtues resolved themselves into industry, and she was inclined to believe that Heaven itself might be achieved by early rising and hard work. If she was greatly gratified, then, at the change produced in her pupil, she was proportionately grateful to the cause of it. But Kate had other qualities which soon attracted the governess and drew her towards her. She possessed that intense thirst for knowledge, so marked a trait in the Irish peasant-nature. She had that sense of power so associated with acquirement as the strongest feature in her character, and in this way she had not—at least she seemed not to have—a predilection for this study or for that; all was new, fascinating, and engaging.

It was as with Aladdin in the mine, all were gems, and she gathered without thinking of their value; so did she pursue with the same eagerness whatever was to be learned. What will not industry, with even moderate capacity, achieve? But hers were faculties of a high order; she had a rapid perception, considerable reasoning power, and a good memory; but above all was the ability she possessed of concentrating her whole thoughts upon the matter before her.

She delighted, too, in praise; not the common eulogy that she had learned this or that well, but such praise as pointed to some future eminence as the price of all this labour; and when her governess told her of a time when she would be so glad to possess this acquirement, or to have mastered that difficulty, she would draw herself up, and with head erect and flashing eye, look a perfect picture of gratified pride.

It would have been difficult for a teacher not to feel pride in such a pupil. It was such a reflected triumph to see how rapidly she could master every task, how easily she met every difficulty ; and so it was that the governess, in her report, though laying all due stress on Ada's charming traits of disposition and temper, speaking actually with affection of her guileless, gentle nature, grew almost rapturous when she spoke of Kate's capacity and progress. She went into the theme with ardour, and was carried away by it much more than she knew or imagined. It was a sort of defence of herself she was making, all unconsciously—a defence of her system, which, as applied to Ada, had not been always a success. This correspondence was invariably carried on with Miss Courtenay, who, for some time contented herself with merely dwelling on what related to her niece, and only passingly, if at all, spoke of Kate.

At last, pushed, as it were, by Mademoiselle Heinzleman's insistance, and vexed at a pertinacity which no silence could repress, she wrote a letter, so full of reprimand that the governess was actually overwhelmed as she read it.

"I have your four last letters before me," wrote she, "and it would be difficult for a stranger on reading them to declare which of the two pupils under your care was your especial charge, and which a merely adventitious element. Not so if the question were to be, Which of the two engrossed all your interest and engaged all your sympathy? We read, it is true, of dear Ada's temper, her kindness, her generosity, and her gentleness—traits which we all recognize, and many of which, we surmise, must have been sorely tried, but of which you can speak with a most fitting and scholastic moderation. Far otherwise, however, does your pen run on when Kate O'Hara is the theme. You are not, perhaps, aware that you are actually eloquent on this subject. You never weary of telling us of her marvellous progress ; how she already begins to speak French ; how she imitates those mysterious pothooks your countrymen persist in using as writing ; how she plays her scales, and what a talent she has for drawing. Do you forget the while that these are very secondary matters of interest to us all here? Do you forget that in her companionship with my niece our whole object was the spring which might be derived from her healthy peasant-nature and light-heartedness? To convert this child into a miracle of accomplishment could serve no purpose of ours, and assuredly would conduce to no advantage of her own.

On this latter point you have only to ask yourself, What will become of all these attainments when she goes back—as she will go back—to her life of poverty and privation? Will her piano make her better company for the pig? Will her French reconcile her to the miseries of a mud cabin?

"She is the child of a poor cottier, a creature so humble that even here in this benighted state we have nothing his equal in indigence; and she will one day or other have to go back to the condition that my brother, with I fear a very mistaken kindness, took her from. You will see, therefore, how misjudging is the interest you are now bestowing. It is, however, the injustice to my niece which more nearly concerns me; and with this object I inform you that if I am not satisfied as to the total change in your system, I shall certainly be prepared to recommend to my brother one of two courses: a change in Ada's governess, or the dismissal of Ada's companion. It is but fair to you to say I prefer the latter.

"Remember, my dear Mademoiselle Heinzleman, this is a purely confidential communication. I have not confided to my sister either my fears or my hopes. The experiment was one I did not augur well from. It has turned out even worse than I expected. Indeed, if Ada was not the very best and sweetest of natures, she could not but resent the unfair preference shown to one so inferior to her in all but those traits which win favour from a schoolmistress. My mother's health precludes all hope of our soon returning to England; indeed, we have even thought of sending for Ada to come here, and it is the dread of this climate, so pernicious to young people, offers the chief obstacle to the plan. Meanwhile, I feel forced to write what I have done, and to lay before you in all sincerity my complaint and its remedy.

"Evening.

"I have re-read your letter, and it seems to me that you might very judiciously remark yourself to Sir Gervais on the inexpediency of any continuance of Kate O'Hara's presence. Her genius, soaring as it does above poor Ada's, makes all emulation impossible. The pilot balloon, that is so soon out of sight, can offer no guidance—don't forget that! Suppose you said to my brother that there was no longer any necessity to continue the stimulus of emulation—that it might become a rivalry—perhaps worse. Say something—anything of this kind—only send her home again, not forgetting the while that you can do now without injury what, later on, will cost a cruelty.

"I can feel for the pain a teacher may experience in parting with a prize pupil, whose proficiency might one day become a triumph; but remember, my dear mademoiselle, that poor, dear simple Ada, to whom genius is denied, is, or ought to be, your first care here, and that the gifted peasant-girl might turn out to have other qualities of a firework besides the brilliancy.

"I will, so far as in me lies, relieve you from some of the embarrassments that the course I advise might provoke. I will request my brother to desire Mr. M'Kinlay to run down and pay you a few hours' visit, and you can easily explain the situation to him, and suggest what I here point out as the remedy.

"Of course, it is needless to repeat this letter is strictly and essentially confidential, and not to be imparted to any one.

"I might have counselled you to have taken the advice of Sir Within Wardle, of whose kindness and attention we are most sensible, if you had not told me of the extraordinary 'influence' —it is your own word, mademoiselle, or I should not even have ventured to use it in such connection—the 'influence' this young girl exercises over Sir Within. As the observation so completely passes my power of comprehension, for I really—and I hope without needless stupidity—cannot understand how a girl of her class, bringing up, and age—age, above all—could exert what you designate as 'influence'—I must beg you will be more explicit in your next.

"You are perfectly right in refusing all presents for either of the girls, and I should have thought Sir Within had more tact than to proffer them. I am also very much against you going to Dalradern Castle for Christmas, though Sir Gervais, up to this, does not agree with me. If this girl should not be sent away before the new year, I think you might advantageously remark to my brother that the visit would be a great interruption to all study, and a serious breach of that home discipline it has been your object to impose. And now, my dear mademoiselle, accept all I have here said not only in your confidence, but in your friendship, and even where I appear to you nervously alive to small perils, give me credit for having thought and reflected much over them before I inflicted on you this long letter.

"Discourage your prodigy, check her influence, and believe me, very sincerely your friend,

"GEORGINA COURTENAY.

"P.S.—What can Sir W. mean by passing his winter in the Welsh mountains, after giving orders to have his villa near Genoa prepared for his reception? Find out this, particularly if there be a secret in it."

Mademoiselle Heinzleman received this letter as she was taking her half-hour's walk in the garden after breakfast—one of the very few recreations she indulged in—while her pupils prepared their books and papers for the day.

Anything like remonstrance was so totally new to her, that she read the letter with a mingled amazement and anger, and, though she read and re-read, in the hope of finding her first impression was an exaggerated one, the truth was that each perusal only deepened the impression, and made the pain more intense.

It was not that her German pride only was wounded, but her dignity as a teacher—just as natural an instinct as the pride of birth—and she muttered very mysterious gutturals to herself, as she went, about resigning her trust and retiring. This was, perhaps, too rash a step; at least it required time to think of. Two hundred a year, and a position surrounded with many advantages! The other alternative was easier: to send away Kate. A pity, perhaps, but after all, as Miss Courtenay said, possibly a mercy. Who could tell? Mr. M'Kinlay might help her by his counsel. She liked him, and thought well of him. Kate, that was making such progress—that could already make out some of Schiller's ballads! What a pity it was! And to think of her touch on the piano, so firm and yet so delicate! How tenderly she let the notes drop in one of those simple melodies from Spohr she was learning! Ach Gott! and what taste in drawing!

Again she opened the letter, and at the last page muttered to herself: "I don't remember that I said 'influence.' I'm almost sure I said that she interested Sir Within. I know I meant to say that she pleased him; that he was delighted to hear her sing her little Lied, dance her Tarantella, or her wild Irish jig, or listen to some of those strange legends, which she tells with a blended seriousness and drollery that is quite captivating. At all events, if I said 'influence,' I can correct the word, and say that Sir Within comes over to see us two or three times a week, and it is plain enough that it is little Kate's gaiety attracts him. What sorrow to the dear children if they are not to pass their Christmas at the Castle!"

A light, elastic step on the gravel startled her. It was Kate who was coming; not the Kate we once saw in the old ruins of St. Finbar, but a young lady, with an air calm and collected, with some conscious sense of power, her head high, her look assured, her step firm even in its lightness.

"Sir Within is in the drawing-room, mademoiselle," said she, with a slight curtsey, as she stood before her. "He says that this is St. Gudule's day, and a holiday everywhere, and he hopes you will be kind enough to take us over to the Castle for dinner."

"Nein! No," said she, peremptorily. "'Wir haben keine solche Heilige,' I mean, said she, correcting the harsh speech, "These saints are not in our calendar. I will speak to him myself. You may stay in the garden for a quarter of an hour. I will send Ada to you."

While the young girl fell back, abashed at the refusal, and even more by the manner with which it was done, the governess smoothed her brow as well as she might to meet the distinguished visitor, but in so doing, as she drew her handkerchief from her pocket, she dropped the letter she had been reading on the walk.

"I wonder why she is so cross with me?" said Kate, as she looked after her; "if there's a secret in it, I must learn it."

While Kate O'Hara sauntered carelessly along her foot struck the letter, and it fell open. She stooped and picked it up, and was at once struck by the peculiar odour of jasmine on the paper, which was a favourite with Miss Courtenay. She turned to the address, "Mademoiselle de Heinzleman"—the "de," too, was a courtesy Miss Courtenay affected—and so Kate stood still contemplating the document, and weighing it in her hand, as she muttered, "It does really feel heavy enough to be mischievous." Her training had taught her to respect as inviolable the letter of another; she had over and over marked the deference paid to a seal, and seen even Ada's letters from her playfellows handed to her unbroken, and she knew that to transgress in such a matter ranked in morals with a falsehood. She had no thought, then, of any dereliction, when in placing the fallen pages together within the envelope, her eye caught the words "Kitty O'Hara," and lower down, "child of a poor cottier." The temptation, stimulated by a passion full as strong as curiosity, mastered her, and carrying away the letter into a secluded alley, she read it from end to end. There was much to gratify her vanity in it; there was the admission—and from no favouring witness either—that she had capacity of a high order, and a zeal to master whatever she desired to learn. But far above the pleasure these words afforded was the last paragraph, that which spoke of her "influence" over Sir Within Wardle. "Could this really be true? Had the little attentions he showed her a deeper significance? Did he really interest himself for her? Was it her lonely, friendless condition touched him? Was it that the same feeling, so harshly expressed by Miss Courtenay, the revulsion that yet awaited her, that moved *him?*" There was an ecstasy in the thought that filled her whole heart with joy. Sir Within was very rich—a great personage, too. The Vyners themselves spoke of him always with a certain deference. What a triumph if she had won him over to befriend her!

These thoughts flew quickly through her mind, and as quickly she bethought her of the letter, and what was now to be done with it. She would have liked much to keep it, to have it by her to read and re-read, and study, and weigh. This was of course impossible. To take it to mademoiselle would be to incur the risk of her suspecting she had read it. In an instant she determined to lay it back again where she had found it, on the walk, and let chance determine what became of it. Her resolution was scarcely carried out, when she heard Mademoiselle Heinzleman's voice calling her.

"I have dropped a letter, Kate. I have mislaid it, or it has fallen out of my pocket. Come and help me to look for it," said she, in deep confusion.

"Is this it, mademoiselle?" said Kitty, artlessly, as she picked it up from the gravel.

"How lucky — how very fortunate!" exclaimed she, eagerly, as she clutched it. "There, you may have your holiday to-day, Kate. Go and tell Ada I shall not ask her to learn those verses; or wait"— she suddenly remembered that Sir Within was still in the drawing-room—"wait here, and I'll tell her myself."

Kate bowed, and smiled her thanks, and once again alone, sat down to ruminate on her fortune.

* * *

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DINNER IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

SIR WITHIN could not persuade mademoiselle to accept his invitation for herself and her pupils to dinner, and was about to take his leave, when Ada suddenly said, "Why not dine with us, Sir Within?"

"Fi! donc, mademoiselle!" broke in the governess. "How could you think of such a thing? Sir Within Wardle sit down to a school-room dinner!"

"But why need it be a school-room dinner, Mademoiselle Heinzleman? Why not tell cook that we mean to have company to-day, and make Rickards wait on us, and tell George to wear his gloves, just as if papa were at home?"

"Oh!" broke in Sir Within, "I have seen quite enough—more than enough—of all that, dear Ada; but if I could be permitted to join your own little daily dinner of the school-room, as you call it, that would really be a treat to me."

"I invite you, then!" said Ada. "Mademoiselle owes me a favour for that wonderful German theme I wrote, and I take this as my reward. We dine at three, Sir Within, and, I warn you, on mutton-broth and mutton something else; but Kate and I will make ourselves as fine as we may, and be as entertaining as possible."

While the two girls scampered off, laughing merrily at the discomfiture of the governess, that respectable lady remained to offer profuse apologies to Sir Within for the liberty, childish though it was, that had been taken with him, and to excuse herself from any imputation of participating in it.

She little knew, indeed, with what honest sincerity he had accepted the proposal. Of the great game of life, as played by fine people, he had seen it to satiety. He was thoroughly wearied of all the pleasures of the table, as he was of all the captivations which witty conversers and clever talkers can throw over society. Perhaps, from his personal experience, he knew how artificial such displays are—how studied the *à propos*, how carefully in ambush the impromptu—and that he longed for the hearty, healthful enjoyment of young, fresh, joyous natures, just as one might turn from the oppressive odours of a perfumer's shop to taste with ecstasy the fresh flowers of a garden. It was, therefore, as he expressed it to the governess, a perfect fête to him to assist at that little dinner, and he was deeply honoured by the invitation.

Mademoiselle was charmed with the old baronet's politeness. It was ceremonious enough even for Germany, he smiled so blandly and bowed so reverently and often, it was like a memory of the Fatherland just to listen to him; and, indeed, it was reassuring to her to hear from him that he had once been a minister at the court of a Herzog, and had acquired his *moden* in this true and legitimate fashion. And thus did they discuss for hours "æsthetic," and idealism, and sympathy, mysterious affinity, impulsive destiny, together with all the realisms which the Butter-brod life of Germany can bring together, so that when she arose to dress for dinner, she could not help muttering to herself, as she went, that he was "a deeply skilled in the human heart-and-far acquainted with the mind's operations—but not the less on that account a fresh-with-a-youthful sincerity-endowed man."

The dinner, though not served in the school-room, was just as simple as Ada promised, and she laughingly asked Sir Within if he preferred his beer frothed or still, such being the only choice of liquor afforded him.

"Mademoiselle is shocked at the way we treat you," said she, laughing, "but I have told her that your condescension would be ill repaid if we made any attempt to lessen its cost, and it must be a 'rice-pudding day' in your life."

And how charmingly they talked, these two girls! Ada doing the honours as a hostess, and Kate, as the favoured friend, who aided her to entertain an honoured guest. They told him, too, how the fresh bouquet that decked the table had been made by themselves to mark the sense they had of his presence, and that the coffee had been prepared by their own hands.

"Now, do say, Sir Within, that dining with Royal Highnesses and Supreme Somethings is but a second-rate pleasure compared to an Irish stew in a school-room, and a chat round a fire that has been lighted with Bonnycastle's Algebra. Yes, mademoiselle," Kate said, "I had to make light of simple equations for once! I was thinking of that story of the merchant, who lighted his fire with the King's bond when his majesty deigned to dine with him. I puzzled my head to remember which of our books lay nearest our heart, and I hesitated long between Ollendorff and Bonnycastle."

"And what decided you?" asked Sir Within.

"What so often decides a doubt—convenience. Bonnycastle had the worst binding, and was easier to burn."

"If you so burn to study algebra, mademoiselle," said the governess, who had misunderstood the whole conversation, "you must first show yourself more *eifrig*—how you call zeal?—for your arithmetic."

"You shall have full liberty, when you pay me a visit, to burn all the volumes on such subjects you find," said Sir Within.

"Oh, I'd go through the whole library," cried Kate, eagerly, "if I could only find one such as Garret O'Moore did."

"I never heard of his fortune."

"Nor I. Do tell it, Kate."

"Mademoiselle has forbidden all my legends," said she, calmly.

"I'm sure," said Sir Within, "she will recall the injunction for this time."

"It is very short," said Kate; and then with infinite archness, turning to the governess, added, "and it has a moral."

The governess nodded a grave permission, and the other began:

"There was once on a time a great family in the west of Ireland called the O'Moores, who, by years of extravagance, spent everything they had in the world, leaving the last of the name, a young man, so utterly destitute, that he had scarcely food to eat, and not a servant to wait on him. He lived in a lonely old house, of which the furniture had been sold off, bit by bit, and nothing remained but a library of old books, which the neighbours did not care for."

"Algebras and Ollendorffs, I suppose," whispered Sir Within; and she smiled and went on:—

"In despair at not finding a purchaser, and pinched by the cold of the long winter's nights, he used to bring an armful of them every night into his room to make his fire. He had not, naturally, much taste for books or learning, but it grieved him sorely to do this; he felt it like a sort of sacrilege, but he felt the piercing cold more, and so he gave in. Well, one night, as he brought in his store, and was turning over the leaves—which he always did before setting fire to them—he came upon a little square volume, with the strangest letters ever he saw; they looked like letters upside down, and gone mad, and some of them were red, and some black, and some golden, and between every page of print there was a sheet of white paper without anything on it. O'Moore examined it well, and at last concluded it must have been some old monkish chronicle, and that the blank pages were left for commentaries on it. At all events, it could have no interest for him, as he couldn't read it, and so he put it down on the hearth till he wanted it to burn.

"It was close on midnight, and nothing but a few dying embers were on the hearth, and no other light in the dreary room, when he took up the old chronicle, and tearing it in two, threw one half on the fire. The moment he did so the flame sprang up bright as silver, lighting up the whole room, so that he could see even the old cobwebs on the ceiling, that had not been seen for years and years, and at the same time a delicious music filled the air, and the sounds of children's voices singing beautifully; but, strangest of all, in the very middle of the bright fire that now filled the whole hearth, there sat a little man with a scarlet cloak on him, and a scarlet hat and a white feather in it, and he smiled very graciously at O'Moore, and beckoned him over to him, but O'Moore was so frightened and so overcome he couldn't stir. At last, as the flames got lower, the little man's gestures grew more energetic, and O'Moore crept down on his knees, and said,—

"'Do you want anything with me, sir?'"

"'Yes, Garret,' said the little man, 'I want to be your friend, and to save you from ruin like the rest of your family. You were wrong to burn that book.'

"'But I couldn't read it,' said Garret; 'what use was it to me?'

"'It was your own life, Garret O'Moore,' said the little man, 'and take care that you keep the part you have there, and study it carefully. It would have been better for you if you had kept the whole of it.'

"And with that the flame sprang brightly up for a second or two, and then went black out, so that O'Moore had to grope about to find tinder to strike a light. He lit the only bit of candle he had, and began to examine the part of the book that remained, and what did he find but on every blank page there was a line—sometimes two—written as if to explain the substance of the printed page, and all in such a way as to show it was somebody's life and adventures—as, for instance: 'Takes to the sea—goes to America—joins an expedition to the Far West—on the plantations—marries—wife dies—off to China—marries again.' I needn't go on: everything that was ever to happen to him was written there till he was forty-five years of age, the rest was burned; but it was all fortunate—all, to the very end. He grew to be very rich, and prospered in everything, for whenever he was faint-hearted or depressed, he always said, 'It wasn't by being low and weak of heart that I begun this career of good fortune, and I must be stout and of high courage if I mean to go on with it.' And he grew so rich that he bought back all the old acres of the O'Moores, and they have a hand rescuing a book from the flames on their arms till this day."

"And the moral?—where's the moral?" asked the governess.

"The moral, the moral!" said Kate, dubiously. "Well, I'm not exactly sure where it is, but I suppose it is this; that it's far better to go to sea as a sailor than to sit down and burn your father's library."

"I have a notion, my dear Kate, that you yourself would like well to have a peep into destiny—am I wrong?"

"I would, sir."

"And you, Ada?"

"Why should *she?*" broke in Kate, eagerly; and then, as though shocked at her impetuosity, she went on, in a lower voice, "Ada makes her voyage in a three-decker, *I* am only clinging to a plank."

"No, no, dearest," said Ada, tenderly; "don't say that."

"Mademoiselle is looking at her watch," said Sir Within, "and I must accept the signal." And though she protested, elaborately too, that it was a mere habit with her, he arose to ring for his carriage. "I am not going without the sketch you promised me, Ada," said he—"the pencil sketch of the old fountain."

"Oh, Kate's is infinitely better. I am ashamed to see mine after it."

"Why not let me have both?"

"Yes," said the governess, "that will be best. I'll go and fetch them."

Ada stood for a moment irresolute, and then muttering, "Mine is really too bad," hastened out of the room after Mademoiselle Heinzleman.

"You are less merry than usual, Kate," said Sir Within, as he took her hand and looked at her with interest. "What is the reason?"

A faint, scarce perceptible motion of her brow was all she made in answer.

"Have you not been well?"

"Yes, sir. I am quite well."

"Have you had news that has distressed you?"

"Where from?" asked she, hurriedly.

"From your friends—from home."

"Don't you know, sir, that I have neither?"

"I meant, my dear child—I meant to say, that perhaps you had heard or learnt something that gave you pain."

"Yes, sir," broke she in, "that is it. Oh, if I could tell you——"

"Why not write it to me, dear child?"

"My writing is coarse and large, and I misspell words; and, besides, it is such a slow way to tell what one's heart is full of—and then I'd do it so badly," faltered she out with pain.

"Suppose, then, I were to settle some early day for you all to come over to Dalradern; you could surely find a moment to tell me then?"

"Yes, sir—yes," cried she; and, seizing his hand, she kissed it passionately three or four times.

"Here they are," said Ada, merrily—"here they are! And if Kate's does ample justice to your beautiful fountain, mine has the merit of showing how ugly it might have been. Isn't this hideous?"

After a few little pleasant commonplaces, Sir Within turned to Mademoiselle Heinzleman, and said; "I have rather an interesting book at Dalradern; at least, it would certainly have its interest for you, mademoiselle. It is a copy of 'Clavigo' with Herder's marginal suggestions. Goethe had sent it to him for his opinion, and Herder returned it marked and annotated. You will do me an infinite favour to accept it."

"Ach Gott!" said the governess, perfectly overwhelmed with the thought of such a treasure.

"Well, then, if the weather be fine on Tuesday, mademoiselle, will you and my young friends here come over and dine with me? We shall say three o'clock for dinner, so that you need not be late on the road. My carriage will be here to fetch you at any hour you appoint."

A joyous burst of delight from Ada, and a glance of intense gratitude from Kate, accompanied the more formal acceptance of the governess; and if Sir Within had but heard one tithe of the flattering things that were said of him, as he drove away, even his heart, seared as it was, would have been touched.

Kate, indeed, said least; but when Ada, turning abruptly to her, asked, "Don't you love him?" a slight colour tinged her cheek, as she said, "I think he's very kind, and very generous, and very——"

"Go on, dear—go on," cried Ada, throwing her arm around her—"finish; and very what?"

"I was going to say an impertinence," whispered she, "and I'll not."

"Nine o'clock, young ladies, and still in the drawing room!" exclaimed the governess, in a tone of reproach. "These are habits of dissipation, indeed—come away. Ach Gott! der Clavigo!" muttered she, with clasped hands. And the girls were hardly able to restrain a burst of laughter at the fervour of her voice and manner.

CHAPTER XXVII.

KITTY.

THE wished-for Tuesday came at last, and with a fortune not always so favouring, brought with it a glorious morning, one of those bright, sharp, clear days, with a deep blue sky and frosty air, and with that sense of elasticity in the atmosphere which imparts itself to the spirits, and makes mere existence enjoyment. The girls were in ecstasy; they had set their hearts so much on this visit, that they would not let themselves trust to the signs of the weather on the night before, but were constantly running out to ask George, the gardener, if that circle round the moon meant anything?—why were the stars so blue?—and why did they twinkle so much?—and was it a sign of fine weather that the river should be heard so clearly? Rickards, too, was importuned to consult the barometer, and impart his experiences of what might be expected from its indications. The gardener augured favourably, was pronounced intelligent, and tipped by Ada in secret. Rickards shook his head at the aspect of the mercury, and was called a "conceited old ass" for his pains. Not either of them treated with different measure than is meted by the public to those great organs of information which are supposed to be their guides, but are just as often their flatterers, for the little world of the family is marvellously like the great world of the nation.

"What a splendid day, Kate! How beautiful the waterfall will look, coming down in showers of diamonds, and how crisp and sharp the copper beech and the big ilex-trees over it! Oh, winter, if this be winter, is really the time for scenery! What makes you so grave, dear? I am wild with spirits to-day."

"And so should I if I were you."

"How can you say that?" said Ada, as she threw her arm around the other's waist. "How can you, Kate, when you know how much cleverer you are, and quicker at everything—how you leave me behind at all I have been working at for years?"

"And never to need that same cleverness is worth it all, I am told!"

"How so? I don't understand you."

"I mean, that you are better off—better dealt with by Fortune to be a born lady than I, if I had all the gifts and all the powers you would bestow upon me."

"This is one of your dark days, as you call them," said Ada, reproachfully; "and you mean to make it one of mine, too, and I was *so* happy."

"This, perhaps, is another of my gifts," said she, with a mocking laugh, "and yet I was brought here to make you merry and light-hearted! Yes, dear, I overheard Mr. Grenfell tell your papa that his plan was a mistake, and that all 'low-bred ones'—that was the name he gave us—lost the little spirit they had when you fed them, and only grew lazy."

"Oh, Kate, for shame!"

"The shame is not mine; it was *he* said it."

"How sad you make me by saying these things."

"Well, but we must own, Ada, he was right! I was—no, I won't say happier, but fifty times as merry and light-hearted before I came here; and though gathering brushwood isn't as picturesque as making a bouquet, I am almost sure I sang over the one, and only sighed over the other."

Ada turned away her head and wiped the tears from her cheeks.

"Isn't it a hopeful thing to try and make people happy?"

"But papa surely wished, and he believed that you would be happy," said Ada, with something almost reproachful in her manner.

"All because he hadn't read that little German fable of the Two Fairies—the one who always did something and failed, and the other who always promised and promised, watering the little plant of Hope, as he calls it, and making believe that the fruit would be, one day, so sweet and so luscious as no lips had ever tasted before. And it's strange, Ada," added she, in a graver tone—"it's strange, but when I was out upon the mountains watching the goats rambling all day alone in the deep heather, how I used to think and think! O dear, what wonderful things did I not think would one day come to pass—how rich I should be, how great, and best of all, how beautiful! How kings and great people would flatter me, and make me grand presents; and how haughty I should be to some, and how gracious to others—perhaps very humble people; and how I'd amaze every one with all I knew, and they'd say, 'Where did she learn this? How did she ever come to know that?"

"And would that be happiness, Kate?"

"Would it not?"

"Then why not have the same dreams now?"

"Because I cannot—because they won't come—because life is too full—because, as we eat before we are hungry, and lie down before we are tired, one's thoughts never go high enough to soar above the pleasures that are around them. At least, I suppose that's the reason. But I don't care whether it is or not; there's the carriage—I hear it coming. And now for such a jolly day in that glorious old garden, with the fountains and the statues, and

> 'All the fine things in rock-work and crockery,
> That make of poor Nature a solemn old mockery.'

Do you know the rest?"

"No, I don't. I never heard it."

"It goes on, a something about

> 'Flowers the gardener ne'er had in his Eden,
> And dells so secluded, they ne'er saw the sun,
> And sweet summer-houses so pleasant to read in,
> With bright little jets-d'eau of eau-de-Cologne.'

Isn't that a Snob's Paradise?—that's what it's called, Ada." And away she went, singing a "Tyrol, tra la, la lira!" with a voice that seemed to ring with joy.

Ada called to her to come back; but she never heeded, and fled down the garden and was soon lost to view. Meanwhile the carriage had reached the door, and as Ada rushed forward to greet it, she stepped back with dismay, for, instead of Sir Within's spruce britschka, it was an old post-chaise, from which descended the well wrapt-up figure of Mr. M'Kinlay.

"Delighted to see you, Miss Ada; how you've grown since I was here—quite a young woman, I declare!" The last words were in soliloquy, for Ada, not aware that he had seen her, had betaken herself to flight to acquaint mademoiselle of his arrival.

"Glad to see you again, sir, in these parts," said Rickards, as he caught up the smallest item of the luggage by way of assisting the traveller. "You had a pleasant journey, I hope, sir?"

"So-so, Rickards—only so-so. It's not the time of year one would choose to come down amongst the Welsh mountains; bitterly cold it was this morning early."

"We'll soon warm you, sir; come into the dining-room. You haven't had breakfast, I'm sure."

"Nothing—not as much as a cup of tea—since four o'clock yesterday."

"Dear me, sir, I don't know how you bear it. It's what I remarked to Sir Gervais. I said, 'There's Mr. M'Kinlay, sir,' said I, 'he goes through more than any young gentleman in the grouse season.'"

"Well, I'm not so very old, Rickards—eh?"

"Old! I should think not, sir—in the very prime of life; and I declare, of an evening, sir, with your white waistcoat on, I'd not guess you to be more than—let me see——"

"Never mind the figure. Ah, this is comfortable; capital old room, and a good old-fashioned fire place."

While the lawyer held his half-frozen hands to the fire, Rickards drew a little table close to the hearth, and, with the dexterity of his calling, arranged the breakfast-things. "A hot steak in one moment, sir, and a devilled kidney or two. Excuse me, sir, but I'd say a little mulled claret would be better than tea; mulled, sir, with just one tablespoonful of old brandy in it—Mr. Grenfell's receipt."

"No man should know better, Rickards."

"Ah, sir, always sharp—always ready you are, to be sure!" And Rickards had to wipe his eyes as he laughed at the repartee.

"And how do you get on here, Rickards?" said M'Kinlay, in a tone evidently meant to invite perfect confidence, and as evidently so interpreted; for, though the door was closed, Rickards went over and laid his hand on it, to assure himself of the fact, and then returned to the fireplace.

"Pretty well, sir, pretty well. The governess will be meddling—these sort of people can't keep from it—about the house expenses, and so on; but I don't stand it, nohow. I just say 'This is the way we always do, mam'sel. It's just thirty-eight years I'm with the master's father and himself. Isn't that a pictur' of a steak, Mr. M'Kinlay? Did you ever see sweeter fat than that, and the gravy in it, sir? Mrs. Byles knows *you*, sir, and does her best. You remember that game-pie, sir, the last time you was here?"

"I think I do, and you told her what I said of it; but I don't like what you say of the governess. She is meddlesome—interferes, eh?"

"Everywhere, sir, wherever she can. With George about the hothouse plants and the melon frames, with Mrs. Byles about the preserves, a thing my lady never so much as spoke of; and t'other day, sir, what d'ye think she does, but comes and says to me, 'Mr. Rickards, you have a cellar-book, haven't you?' 'Yes, ma'am,' says I; 'and if the young ladies wants it in the school-room to larn out of, I'll bring it in with pleasure.' Wasn't that pretty home, sir, eh?"

"And what did she say to that?"

"She whisked about this way"—here Mr. Rickards made a bold pirouette—"and said something in high Dutch that I feel sure wasn't a blessing."

"Tell me one thing, Rickards," said the lawyer, in a lower tone, and with the air of a complete confidante. "What's this little game she's playing about that Irish girl, writing to my lady that she's a genius, and she can do this, that, and t'other, and that you've only to show her a book, and she knows it from cover to cover?"

"And don't you see what it is, sir?" said Rickards, with one eye knowingly closed; "don't you see it, sir?"

"No, Rickards, I do not."

"It's all the way that little sarpent has of comin' round her. Of all the creatures ever I seen, I never knew her equal for cunning. It ain't any use knowing she's a fox—not a bit of it, sir—she'll get round you all the same. It's not an easy thing to get to the blind side of Mrs. Byles, I promise you. She's a very knowledgeable woman, lived eleven years under a man-cook at Lord Wandsford's, and knows jellies, and made French dishes as well as Monsieur Honoré himself. Well, sir, that imp there winds her round her finger like a piece of packthread. She goes and says, 'Byles'—she doesn't as much as Mrs. Byles her, the way my lady would—but 'Byles'—says she, 'if ever I come to be a great lady and very rich, I'll have you to keep my house, and you shall have your own nice sittin'-room, and your own maid to wait on you, and a hundred a year settled on you for life.' I vow it's a fact, sir, wherever she heard of such a thing, but said 'settled on you for life;' and then, sir, she'll sit down and help her with the strawberry jam, or the brandy-peaches, or whatever it is, and Mrs. Byles says there wouldn't be her equal in all England, if she only took to be a still-room maid."

"And can she humbug Mr. Rickards? Tell me that," asked the lawyer, with the leer of an old cross-examiner.

"Well, I do think, sir, she can't do that. It's not every one as could."

"No, Rickards; you and I know how to sleep with one eye open. But what does she mean by all this cunning—what does she intend by it?"

"There's what I can't come at, nohow, sir; for, as I say, what's the good of plotting when you have everything at your hand? She hasn't no need for it, Mr. M'Kinlay. She has the same treatment here as Miss Ada herself—it was the master's orders."

"It puzzles me, Rickards; I own it puzzles me," said the lawyer, as, with his hands deep in his pockets, he took a turn or two in the room.

"They say, sir, it's the way of them Irish," said Rickards, with the air of a man enunciating a profound sentiment; but M'Kinlay either did not hear, or did not value the remark, for, after a pause, he said,—

"It's just possible, after all, Rickards, that it's only a way she has. Don't you think so?"

"I do not, sir," replied he, stoutly. "If there wasn't more than that in it, she wouldn't go on as I have seen her do, when she thought she was all alone."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"Well, you see, sir, there's a laurel hedge in the garden, that goes along by the wall where the peach-trees are, and that's her favourite walk, and I've watched her when she was there by herself, and it was as good as any play to see her."

"In what respect?"

"She'd be making believe all sorts of things to herself—how that she was a fine lady showing the grounds to a party of visitors, telling them how she intended to build something here and throw down something there, what trees she'd plant in one place, and what an opening for a view she'd make in another. You'd not believe your ears if you heard how glibly she'd run on about plants and shrubs and flowers. And then suddenly she'd change, and pretend to call her maid, and tell her to fetch her another shawl or her gloves; or she'd say, 'Tell George I shall not ride to-day, perhaps I'll drive out in the evening.' And that's the way she'd go on till she heard the governess coming, and then, just as quick as lightning, you'd hear her in her own voice again, as artless as any young creature you ever listened to."

"I see—I see," said M'Kinlay, with a sententious air and look, as though he read the whole case, and saw her entire disposition revealed before him like a plan. "A shrewd minx in her own way, but a very small way it is. Now, Rickards, perhaps you'd tell Miss Heinzleman that I'm here—of course, not a word about what we've been talking over."

"You couldn't think it, sir."

"Not for a moment, Rickards. I could trust to your discretion like my own."

When Mr. M'Kinlay was left alone, he drew forth some letters from his pocket, and sought out one in a small envelope, the address of which was in a lady's writing. It was a very brief note from Miss Courtenay to himself, expressing her wish that he could find it convenient to run down, if only for a day, to Wales, and counsel Mademoiselle Heinzleman on a point of some difficulty respecting one of her pupils. The letter was evidently written in terms to be shown to a third party, and implied a case in which the writer's interest was deep and strong, but wherein she implicitly trusted to the good judgment of her friend, Mr. M'Kinlay, for the result.

"You will hear," wrote she, "from Mademoiselle Heinzleman the scruples she has communicated to myself, and learn from her that all the advantages derivable from my brother-in-law's project have been already realized, but that henceforth difficulties alone may be apprehended, so that your consideration will be drawn at once to the question whether this companionship is further necessary, or indeed advisable." She went on to state that if Sir Gervais had not told her Mr. M'Kinlay would be obliged to go down to the cottage for certain law papers he required, she would have scarcely ventured on imposing the present charge upon him, but that she felt assured, in the great regard he had always expressed for the family, of his ready forgiveness.

A small loose slip, marked "Strictly private and confidential," was enclosed within the note, the words of which ran thus: "You will see that you must imply to Mademoiselle H. that she has written to me in the terms and the spirit of *my* letter to *her*, and in this way pledge her to whatever course you mean to adopt. This will be easy, for she is a fool.

"I cannot believe that all the interest she assumes to take in K. is prompted by the girl's qualities, or her aptitude to learn, and I gravely suspect she has my brother-in-law's instructions on this head. This plot, for plot it is, I am determined to thwart, and at any cost. The girl must be got rid of, sent to a school, or if no better way offer, sent home again. See that you manage this in such a way as will not compromise yourself, nor endanger you in the esteem of

"G. C."

This last line he re-read before he enclosed the slip in his pocket-book, and muttered to himself the words, "endanger you in the esteem of Georgina Courtenay."

"I wonder what she means by all this?" muttered he, as he folded the loose slip and placed it within the recess of his pocket-book. "The whole scheme of educating this girl was never a very wise one, but it need not have called up such formidable animosity as this. Ah, mademoiselle, I am charmed to see you looking so well; this mountain air agrees with you," said he, as the governess entered. "I have come down to search for some documents Sir Gervais tells me I shall find in his desk here, and will ask you to let me be your guest for twenty-four hours."

Mademoiselle professed the pleasure his visit would confer, and in an interchange of compliments some time was passed; at length, Mr. M'Kinlay, as if suddenly remembering himself, said, "By the way here is a note I have just received from Miss Courtenay; I think you may as well read it yourself."

The lawyer watched her face keenly as she read over the letter, and saw clearly enough, in the puzzled expression of her features, that she was trying to recall what she could have written in her last letter to Rome.

"Sonderbar, es ist sonderbar: it is strange, very strange," muttered she, evidently lost in doubt, "for in my letter of this morning from Lady Vyner, she says that we shall probably soon be sent for to Italy, for that her mother has a great longing to see Ada; and yet there is no hint whatever about Kate."

"Does she mention that she expects Miss O'Hara to accompany you?" asked he.

"She does not say so; her words are, 'Do not feel startled if my next letter will call you to us, for her grandmother is most anxious to see Ada;' and then she goes on to say what different routes there are, and where Sir Gervais could meet us."

"I think I understand the reserve," said Mr. M'Kinlay, with an air of much wisdom; "her ladyship addresses herself to one question solely, and leaves all outside of it to be dealt with by others. It is for us—for you, mademoiselle, and I—to think of what is to be done with Miss O'Hara."

"What is there to be done but take her with us?—without, indeed, you were to send her home again," said she, with some agitation in her voice.

"That is the whole question, mademoiselle; we must think over it carefully, and, first of all, I must examine certain papers here, which will explain what are the legal claims of this young lady, and who are her guardians; for I remember, though Mr. Grenfell was to have acted, and, indeed, his name was written in pencil, Sir Gervais changed his mind, and thought of another trustee. For all these matters I shall want a little time, and perhaps it will not be asking too great a favour if I were to beg to let me have my whole day to myself in the library, and the churlish privilege of being alone."

The governess acceded politely to his proposal, not sorry, perhaps, to have a short interval to herself for consideration over the question before her, and still better pleased, too, that the girls were not destined to lose the long-wished-for delight of a day at Dalradern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SIR WITHIN "AT HOME."

If the two young girls whose visit Sir Within Wardle was expecting had been princesses of a royal house, he could scarcely have made more preparations for their reception. Who knows if he did not, indeed, feign to himself that his castle was on that morning to be honoured by the presence of those who move among lesser humanities as suns do among inferior orbs? It would have certainly been one of those illusions natural to such a man; he loved that great world, and he loved all that revived it in his memory; and so when he gave orders that all the state furniture of the castle should be uncovered, the handsomest rooms thrown open, and the servants in their dress liveries, the probability is, that the fête he was giving was an offering secretly dedicated to himself.

In the old court-yard, beautiful plants—magnolias, camellias, and rare geraniums—were arranged, regardless that the nipping cold of a sharp winter's day was to consign so many of them to an early death; and over the fountain and the statues around it, beautiful orchids were draped—delicate tendrils torn from the genial air of the conservatory, to waste a few hours of beauty ere they drooped for ever.

Sir Within heard the remonstrances of his afflicted gardener with the bland dignity he would have listened to a diplomatic "reclamation;" and then instantly assured him that his representations should have due weight on the next similar occasion, but, for the present, his commands were absolute. The comments of a household disturbed on a pretext so humble may be easily imagined. The vested interests of major-domo, and butler, and housekeeper, are not institutions to be lightly dealt with, and many indeed were the unflattering commentaries bestowed on the intelligence and understanding of him who had turned the house out of the windows for a couple of "school-girls." But guesses that actually rose to the impertinence of impeachment of his sanity were uttered, when the old baronet came downstairs wearing his ribbon and his star.

And it was thus attired that he received them as they drove into the court, and alighted at the foot of the grand staircase.

"You see, young ladies," said he, with a courtly smile, "that I deem the honour of your visit no small distinction. That old river-god yonder and myself have put on our smartest coats; and it is only to be hoped neither of us will be the worse for our 'Bath.'"

Ada smiled graciously and bowed her thanks; but Kate, with a sparkle in her eye, muttered, in his hearing too, "How neatly said!" a little compliment that fluttered the old man, bringing back days when a happy *mot* was a success only second to a victory.

"As you have never been here before, you must allow me to be your 'Cicerone;' and I'll be a more merciful one than Mrs. Simcox, my housekeeper, who really would not spare you one of my ancestors since the Conquest. These grim people, then, at either side of us are Withins or Wardles; nine generations of excellent mortals are gazing on us; that dark one yonder, Sir Hugh, was standard-bearer to Henry the Second; and that fair-faced damsel yonder was maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, and betrothed to her cousin, Sir Walter Raleigh, whom she threw off in a fit of jealousy; the massive ring that she wears on her finger is described in the chronicle, as an 'auncient seale of Sir Walter with his armes.'"

"So that," said Kate, "we may infer that at the time of the portrait she was yet betrothed."

Sir Within was pleased at a remark that seemed to show interest in his description; and henceforth, unconsciously indeed, directed most of his attention to her.

"We had not many warriors amongst us," continued he. "Most of my ancestors were statesmen or penmen. The thin, hard-visaged man yonder, however, was killed at Dettingen that sweet-faced girl—she looks a mere girl—was his wife."

"His wife! I thought she was his daughter," said Ada, with some disappointment in her voice.

"Why not his wife?" interposed Kate; "he looks a very gallant gentleman."

Sir Within smiled, and turned on her a look of most meaning admiration.

"I perceive," said he, in a low tone, "that neither wrinkles nor a grey beard can hide chivalry from *your* eyes. He was, indeed, a gallant gentleman. Mademoiselle," said he, turning to the governess, "you will, I hope, pardon all this display of family pretension, the more, since it is the last of the race inflicts it."

A faint sigh—so faint, that if Kate, who uttered it, had not been beside him, he could not have heard it—fell on the old baronet's ear, and, in a flutter of strange emotion, he passed rapidly on, and gained the landing-place. From room to room they strolled leisurely on. Pictures, statues, antique cabinets, and rare china, arresting attention at every moment. There were, indeed, objects to have attracted more critical observers; but in their eager delight at all they saw, their fresh enthusiasm, their frank outspoken enjoyment, Sir Within reaped a satisfaction far and away beyond all the most finished connoisseurship would have yielded him.

He showed them his armoury—mailed suits of every time and country, from the rudely-shaped corslets of Northern Europe, to the chased and inlaid workmanship of Milan and Seville; and with these were weapons of Eastern fashion, a scimitar whose scabbard was of gold, and a helmet of solid silver amongst them; and, last of all, he introduced them into a small low-ceilinged chamber, with a massive door of iron concealed behind one of oak. This he called his "Gem-room;" and here were gathered together a variety of beautiful things, ranging from ancient coins and medals to the most costly ornaments in jewellery; jewelled watches, bon-bon boxes of the time of Louis XIV., enamelled miniatures in frames of brilliants, and decorations of various foreign orders, which, though not at liberty to wear, he treasured as relics of infinite worth. Kate hung over these like one entranced. The costly splendour seemed so completely to have captivated her, that she heard scarcely a word around her, and appeared like one fascinated by an object too engrossing to admit a thought, save of itself.

"Shall I own that I like those grand landscapes we saw in the second drawing-room better than all these gorgeous things?" said Ada. "That beautiful Salvator Rosa, with the warm sunset on the sea-shore, and the fishermen drying their nets—may I go back and look at it?"

"By all means," said Sir Within. "Remember, that all here is at your disposal. I want first of all to show mademoiselle my library, and then, while I am giving some orders to my household, you shall be free of me—free to ramble about where you like. Will you come with us, Kate?" said he, as he prepared to leave the room.

"Not if I may remain here. I'd like to pass days in this little chamber."

"Remain then, of course; and now, mademoiselle, if you will accompany me, I will show you my books."

Scarcely had the door closed, and Kate found herself alone, than she opened one of the glass-cases in which some of the costliest trinkets lay. There was a splendid cameo brooch of Madame de Valois, with her crest in diamonds at top. This Kate gazed at long and thoughtfully, and at last fastened on her breast, walking to the glass to see its effect. She half started as she looked; and, whether in astonishment at seeing herself the wearer of such magnificence, or that some other and far deeper sentiment worked within her, her eyes became intensely brilliant, and her cheek crimson. She hurried back, and drew forth a massive necklace of emeralds and brilliants. It was labelled "A present from the Emperor to Marie Antoinette on the birth of the Dauphin." She clasped it round her throat, her fingers trembling with excitement, and her heart beating almost audibly. "Oh!" cried she, as she looked at herself again in the mirror; and how eloquent was the cry—the whole outburst of a nature carried away by intense delight and the sentiment of an all-engrossing self-admiration, for indeed she did look surpassingly lovely, the momentary excitement combining with the lustre of the jewels to light up her whole face into a radiant and splendid beauty.

She took out next a large fan actually weighted with precious stones, and opening this, she seated herself in front of the glass, to survey herself at her ease. Lying back languidly in the deep old chair, the hand which held the fan indolently drooped over the arm of the chair, while with the other she played with the massive drop of the emerald necklace, she looked exceedingly beautiful. Her own ecstasy had heightened her colour and given a brilliant depth to the expression of her eyes, while a faint, scarcely detectable quiver in her lip showed how intense was her enjoyment of the moment. Even as she gazed, a gentle dreamy sentiment stole over her, visions, Heaven knows of what future triumphs, of days when others should offer their homage to that loveliness, when sculptors would mould and poets sing that beauty; for in its power upon herself she knew that it was Beauty, and so as she looked her eyelids drooped, her breathing grew longer and longer, her cheek, save in one pink cloud, became pale, and she fell off asleep. Once or twice her lips murmured a word or two, but too faintly to be caught. She smiled, too, that sweet smile of happy sleep, when softly creeping thoughts steal over the mind, as the light air of evening steals across a lake.

For nearly an hour did she lie thus, when Sir Within came in search of her. His habitual light step and cautious gait never disturbed her, and there he stood gazing on her, amazed, almost enraptured. "Where was there a Titian or a Raphael like that!" was his first thought; for, with the instinct of his life, it was to Art he at once referred her. "Was there ever drawing or colour could compare to it!" Through the stained glass window one ray of golden glory pierced and fell upon her hair and brow, and he remembered how he had seen the same "effect" in a "Memling," but still immeasurably inferior to this. "What would he not have given that Danneker or Canova could have seen her thus and modelled her! Greek art itself had nothing finer in form, and as to her face, she was infinitely more beautiful than anything the antique presented. How was it that in all his hitherto admiration of her he had never before recognized such surpassing beauty? Was it that excitement disturbed the calm loveliness, and gave too much mobility to these traits? or was it that, in her versatile, capricious way, she had never given him time for admiration? As for the gems, he did not remark them for a long while, and when he did, it was to feel how much more *she* adorned *them* than they contributed to her loveliness.

"I must bring Ada here," muttered he to himself. "How she will be charmed with the picture!" He turned to steal away, and then, with the thoughtful instinct of his order, he moved noiselessly across the room, and turned the looking-glass to the wall. It was a small trait, but in it there spoke the old diplomatist. On gaining the drawing-room he heard that the governess and Ada had gone out to see the conservatory, so Sir Within hurried back to the Gem-room, not fully determined whether to awaken Kate or suffer her to sleep on. Remembering suddenly that if discovered all jewelled and bedecked the young girl would feel overcome with a sense of shame, he resolved not to disturb her. Still he wished to take a last look, and stole noiselessly back to the chamber.

Her position had changed since he left the room, the fan had fallen from her hand to the floor, and by a slight, very slight, motion of the eyelids he could mark that her sleep was no longer untroubled. "Poor girl," muttered he, "I must not leave her to dream of sorrow;" and laying his hand softly on the back of hers, he said, in a low whisper, "Kate, were you dreaming, my child?"

She raised her eyelids slowly, lazily, and looked calmly at him without a word.

"What was your dream, Kate?" said he, gently, as he bent over her.

"Was it a dream?" murmured she, softly. "I wish it had not been a dream."

"And what was it then?" said he, as taking a chair, he sat down beside her—"tell me of it all."

"I thought a great queen, who had no child of her own, had adopted me, and said I should be her daughter, and in proof of it she took a beautiful collar from her throat and fastened it on mine."

"You see so much is true," said he, pointing to the massive emerald drop that hung upon her neck.

Kate's cheek flushed a deep crimson as her eyes glanced rapidly over the room, and her mind seemed in an instant to recover itself. "I hope you are not angry with me," stammered she, in deep confusion. "I know I have been very foolish—will you forgive me?" As she came to the last words she dropped upon her knees, and, bending forward, hid her head between his hands.

"My sweet child, there is not anything to forgive. As to those trinkets, I never believed they were so handsome till I saw them on you."

"It was wrong—very wrong; but I was alone, and I thought no one would ever see me. If I was sure you had forgiven me——"

"Be sure, my dear child," said he, as he smoothed back her golden hair, caressing the beautiful head with his wasted fingers; "and now that I have assured you of this, tell me what it was you wished to speak of to me. You had a trouble, you said—what was it, Kate?"

"May I tell you of it?" asked she, lifting her eyes for the first time towards him, and gazing upwards through her tears.

"To be sure you may, child, and with the certainty that you speak to one who loves you."

"But I do not know how I can tell it—that is, how you are to believe what I shall tell you, when I am not able to say why and how I know the truth of what I shall say."

"More likely is it, child, I shall not ask that question, but take your word for it all."

"Yes, that is true; it is what you would do. I ought to have seen that," muttered she, half aloud. "Are we certain to be alone here? Can I tell you now?"

"Certainly. They are off to see the gardens. None will interrupt us: say on."

"Mind," said she, eagerly, "you are not to ask me anything."

"I agree. Go on."

"At the same time, you shall be free to find out from others whether I have misled you or not."

"Go on, my dear child, and do not torment yourself with needless cares. I want to hear what it is that grieves you, and if I can remove your sorrow."

"You can at least counsel me—guide me."

"It is my right and my duty to do so. I am one of your guardians, Kate," said he, encouragingly.

"Do you remember the morning I came from Ireland, the morning of my arrival at the Cottage?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you remember my grandfather hesitating whether he would let me stay, till some promise was given him that I should not be sent away out of a whim, or a fancy, or at least some pledge as to what should be done with me?"

"I remember it all."

"Well, he was right to have foreseen it. The time *has* come. Mind your promise—do not question me—but I know that they mean to send me——I cannot—I will not call it home," cried she, fiercely. "Home means shelter—friends—safety. Which of these does it offer *me?*"

"Be calm, my dear child; be calm and tell me all that you know. What reason have they for this change?"

"Ada is to go to Italy, to see her grandmother, who is ill. I am no longer wanted, and to be sent away."

"This is very unlike them. It is incredible."

"I knew you would say so," said she, with a heightened colour, and a sparkling eye. "*They* of course could do no wrong, but perhaps I can convince you. You know Mr. M'Kinlay,—he is now at the Cottage,—he has come down about this. Oh!" burst she out with a wild cry, while the tears ran down her cheeks—"oh, how bold my sorrow makes me, that I can speak this way to you. But save me! oh save me from this degradation! It is not the poverty of that life I dread, so much as the taunts upon me for my failure; the daily scoffs I shall have to meet from those who hoped to build their fortunes on my success. Tell me, then, where I may go to earn my daily bread, so it be not there. I could be a servant. I have seen girls as young as me at service. I could take care of little children, and could teach them, too. Will you help me? Will you help me," cried she, sobbing, "and see if I will not deserve it?"

"Be comforted, my poor child. I have told you already you have a right to my assistance, and you shall have it."

She bent down and kissed his hand, and pressed her cheek upon it.

"Tell me, Kate, do you desire to go abroad with Ada?"

"Not now," said she, in a faint voice. "I did, but I do so no longer."

"And on no account to return to Ireland."

"On none," said she, resolutely.

"Then I will think the matter over. I will send for Mr. M'Kinlay to-morrow, and doubtless he will make some communication to me."

"But do not forget, sir, that you must not betray *me*."

"I will take care of that, Kate; but come, my dear child, bathe these eyes of yours, and come into the air. They will wonder, besides, if they do not see you. Let us go and find them. Your heart may be at rest now. Is it not so?"

"I have your promise, sir?"

"You have, child."

"Oh! am I not happy again!" said she, throwing back her long hair upon her neck, and turning towards him her eyes beaming with gratitude, and bright with triumph. "I have spent two nights of misery, but they are well repaid by the joy I feel now."

"There. You look like yourself already," said he. "Come, and we'll search for them."

"What am I thinking of?" cried she, suddenly. "I was forgetting these;" and she unclasped the necklace, and took off the brooch, depositing them carefully in their places.

"You shall wear them again one of these days, Kate," said he, with a look of pensive meaning.

"They only served me to build castles with," said she, gaily, "and the words you have spoken will help me to raise much finer ones. I am ready now, sir."

"Of all the days of your life," whispered Ada to Kate, as they drove home that evening, "was this the happiest?"

"It was," said the other, thoughtfully.

"And mine, too. I had not one dark thought till I saw evening coming on, and felt how soon it was to end. But I have such happy news for you, dear Kate, only I am not at liberty to tell it—something that is going to happen—somewhere we are about to go."

"Do not tell me more, or I shall become too curious to hear all."

"But you would be so glad, so overjoyed to hear it."

"One can always wait patiently for good tidings, the wise people say. Where did you get your violets in midwinter?"

"Where *you* got your roses, Kate," said the other, laughing. "I never saw such pink cheeks as you had when you came into the garden."

"I had fallen asleep," said Kate, blushing slightly. "Whenever I am very, very happy, I grow sleepy."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. M'KINLAY IS PUZZLED.

MR. M'KINLAY was at his breakfast the next day when he received the following letter from Sir Gervais Vyner:—

"Rome, Palazzo Altieri.

"MY DEAR MR. M'KINLAY,—Lady Vyner's mother insists on seeing Ada out here, and will not listen to anything, either on the score of the season or the long journey. I cannot myself venture to be absent for more than a few days at a time; and I must entreat of you to give mademoiselle and my daughter a safe convoy as far as Marseilles, where I shall meet you. I know well how very inconvenient it may prove to you, just as term is about to open, so pray make me deeply your debtor for the service *in all ways.* My sister-in-law informs me—but so vaguely that I cannot appreciate the reasons—that Mademoiselle H. does not advise Miss O'Hara should accompany them. It will be for you to learn the grounds of this counsel, and if you concur with them to make a suitable arrangement for that young lady's maintenance and education in England, unless, indeed, her friends require her to return home. To whatever you decide, let money be no obstacle. There are good schools at Brighton, I believe. If her friends prefer a French education, Madame Gosselin's, Rue Neuve, St. Augustin, Paris, is well spoken of. See Sir Within Wardle on the subject, who, besides being her guardian, is well qualified to direct your steps.

"I cannot tell you how much I am provoked by what I must call this failure in a favourite project, nor is my annoyance the less that I am not permitted to know how, when, or why the failure has been occasioned. All that Miss Courtenay will tell me is, 'She must not come out to Italy,' and that I shall be the first to agree to the wisdom of this decision when I shall hear the reasons for it. Of course all this is between ourselves, and with Sir Within you will limit yourself to the fact that her education will be more carefully provided for by remaining north of the Alps—a truth he will, I am certain, recognize.

"Be sure, however, to get to the bottom of this—I may call it—mystery, for up to this I have regarded Ada's progress in learning, and great improvement in spirits, as entirely owing to this very companionship.

"Drop me a line to say if you can start on Monday or Tuesday, and at the Pavilion Hotel you will either find me on your arrival or a note to say when to expect me. Tell Sir Within from me, that I will accept any trouble he shall take with Miss O'H. as a direct personal favour. I am not at all satisfied with the part we are taking towards this girl; nor shall I be easy until I hear from you that all is arranged to her own liking, and the perfect satisfaction of her family. I think, indeed, you shall write to Mr. L., at Arran; his concurrence ought to be secured, as a formality; and he'll not refuse it, if not linked to something troublesome or inconvenient.

"I shall be curious to hear your personal report of Miss O'Hara, so take care to fit yourself for a very searching cross-examination from

"Yours faithfully,
"GERVAIS VYNER.

"I hear that the people have just thrown down the walls of my new lodge in Derryvaragh, and vowed that they'll not permit any one to build there. Are they mad? Can they not see that a proprietor, if he should ever come there, must be of use to them, and that all the benefit would be *theirs?* Grenfell laughs at me, and says he predicted it all. Perhaps he did: at all events, I shall not be deterred from going on, though neither of my Irish experiences have as yet redounded to my vain glory.

"I have not the shadow of a reason for suspecting it, still you would confer a favour on me if you could assure me, of your own knowledge, that nothing weightier than a caprice has induced mademoiselle to recommend that Miss O'H. should not come out here with my daughter.

"All of this letter is to be regarded private and confidential."

Scarcely had M'Kinlay finished the reading of this letter, than a servant presented him with a small note, sealed with a very large impress of the Wardle arms, and bearing a conspicuous "W. W." on the outer corner. Its contents ran thus:

"My Dear Mr. M‘Kinlay,—Will you allow me to profit by the fortunate accident of your presence in these regions to bespeak the honour and pleasure of your company at a *tête-à-tête* dinner with me to-day? My carriage will await your orders; and if perfectly in accordance with your convenience, I would beg that they may be to take you over here by an early hour—say four o'clock—as I am desirous of obtaining the benefit of your advice.

"I am very sincerely yours,
"Within Wardle."

"How provoking!" cried Mr. M‘Kinlay; "and I meant to have caught the night-mail at Wrexham."

Now Mr. M‘Kinlay was not either provoked or disappointed. It had never been his intention to have left the Cottage till the day after; and as to a dinner invitation to Dalradern, and with "the contingent remainder" of a consultation, it was in every respect the direct opposite of all that is provoking. Here he was alone. None heard him as he said these words. This hypocrisy was not addressed to any surrounders. It was the soliloquy of a man who liked self-flattery, and, strange as it may seem, there are scores of people who mix these sweet little draughts for themselves and toss them off in secrecy, like solitary drinkers, and then go out into the world refreshed and stimulated by their dram.

"I cannot take his agency, if that's what he is at," said Mr. M‘Kinlay, as he stood with his back to the fire and fingered the seals of his watch; "I am overworked already—sorely overworked. Clients, now-a-days, I find, have got the habit of employing their lawyers in a variety of ways quite foreign to their callings." This was a hit at Sir Gervais for his request to take Ada abroad. "A practice highly to be condemned, and, in fact, to be put down. It is not dignified; and I doubt if even it be profitable,"—his tone was now strong and severe. "A fine old place, Dalradern," muttered he, as his eyes fell upon a little engraving of the castle at the top of the note—such vignettes were rarer at that day than at the present—"I think, really, I will give myself a bit of a holiday and dine with him. I thought him a bit of a fop—an old fop, too—when I met him here; but he may 'cut up' better under his own roof."

"Rickards," said he, as that bland personage entered to remove the breakfast-things, "I am not going to dine here to-day."

"Lor, sir! You an't a going so soon?"

"No. To-morrow, perhaps—indeed, I should say to-morrow certainly; but to-day I must dine at Dalradern."

"Well, sir, you'll tell me when you comes home if he's better than Mrs. Byles for his side-dishes; for I'll never believe it, sir, till I have it from a knowledgeable gentleman like yourself. Not that I think, sir, they will play off any of their new-fangled tricks on you—putting cheese into the soup, and powdered sugar over the peas."

"I have seen both in Paris," said M'Kinlay, gravely.

"And frogs too, sir, and snails; and Jacob, that was out in Italy with the saddle-horses, says he seen fifteen shillings given for a hedgehog, when lamb got too big."

"Let Mademoiselle Heinzleman know that I should be glad to speak to her," said the lawyer, who, feeling that he was going to dine out, could afford to be distant.

"Yes, sir, I'll tell her;" and Rickards stirred the fire, and drew down a blind here, and drew up another there, and fidgeted about in that professionally desultory manner his order so well understand. When he got to the door, however, he stepped back, and in a low confidential whisper said, "It's the 'ock, sir, the 'ock, at Dalradern, that beats us; eighty odd years in bottle, and worth three guineas a flask." He sighed as he went out, for the confession cost him dear. It was like a Government whip admitting that his party must be beaten on the next division!

Mr. M'Kinlay was deep in a second perusal of Sir Gervais Vyner's letter when Mademoiselle Heinzleman entered. "I have a few lines from Sir Gervais here, mademoiselle," said he, pompously, for the invitation to Dalradern was still fresh in his mind. "He wishes me, if it be at all possible, to accompany you and Miss Vyner as far as, let me see"—and he opened the letter—"as far as Marseilles. I own, with whatever pride I should accept the charge, however charmed I should naturally feel at the prospect of a journey in such company——"

"Es macht nichts. I mean, sare," said she, impetuously, "with Franz, the courier, we can travel very well all alone."

"If you will permit me ,mademoiselle," said he, haughtily, "to finish my phrase, you will find that, notwithstanding my many and pressing engagements, and the incessant demands which the opening of term makes upon my time, it is my intention not to refuse this—this, I shall call it favour—for it is favour—to my respected client. Can you be ready by Monday?"

"We are Wednesday now! Yes; but of Mademoiselle Kate, what of her? Does she come with us?"

"I opine not," said he, gravely.

"And where she go to?" said she, with an eagerness which occasionally marred the accuracy of her expression.

"Sir Gervais has suggested that we may take one of two courses, mademoiselle," said he, and probably something in the phrase reminded M'Kinlay of a well-known statesman, for he unconsciously extended an arm, and with the other lifted his coat-skirt behind him, "or, it is even possible, adopt a third."

"This means, she is not to come with us, sir."

Mr. M'Kinlay bowed his concurrence. "You see, mademoiselle," said he, authoritatively, "it was a mistake from the beginning, and though I warned Sir Gervais that it must be a mistake, he would have his way; he thought she would be a means of creating emulation."

"So she has, sir."

"I mean, wholesome emulation; the generous rivalry—the—the—in fact, that she would excite Miss Vyner to a more vigorous prosecution of her studies, without that discouragement that follows a conscious—what shall I call it—not inferiority?"

"Yes, inferiority."

"This, I am aware, mademoiselle, was your view; the letter I hold here from Miss Courtenay shows me the very painful impression your opinion has produced; nor am I astonished at the warmth—and there is warmth—with which she observes: 'Mademoiselle H. is under a delusion if she imagines that my brother-in-law was about to establish a nursery for prodigies. If the pigeon turns out to be an eagle, the sooner it is out of the dovecot the better.' Very neatly and very smartly put. 'If the pigeon——'"

"Enough of the pigeon, sare. Where is she to go? who will take her in charge?"

"I have not fully decided on the point, mademoiselle, but by this evening I hope to have determined upon it; for the present I have only to apprise you that Miss O'Hara is not to go to Italy, and that whatever arrangement should be necessary for her—either to remain in England, or to return to her family, will be made as promptly as possible."

"And who will take her in charge, sare?" said she, repeating the former question.

Mr. M'Kinlay laid his hand over the region of his heart, and bowed; but whether he meant that he himself would undertake the guardianship of the young lady, or that the matter was a secret enclosed in his own breast, is not at all easy to say.

"May I speak to her about this?"

"Not until I shall see you again; but you may take all such measures as may prepare her for her sudden departure."

Mr. M'Kinlay was, throughout the brief interview, more despotic than gallant. He was not quite satisfied that the mission was one in perfect accordance with his high professional dignity, and so to relieve himself from any self-reproach, he threw a dash of severity through his condescension.

"I suppose," said he, superbly—"I suppose she has clothes?"

Mademoiselle stared at this, but did not reply.

"I am somewhat unaccustomed, as you may perceive, mademoiselle, to these sort of affairs; I know nothing of young ladies' wardrobes. I simply asked, was she in a position to travel, if called on, at a brief notice?"

"My poor Kate! my poor Kate!" was all that the governess could utter.

"I must say, mademoiselle," said he, pompously, "that, looking to what she originally came from, and taking into account the care and cost bestowed upon her, I do not perceive this to be a case that calls for any deep commiseration."

"Poor child! poor child!" stammered she out; and, unable to control her emotion, she arose and left the room.

"Rickards was right; that artful minx had won them all over. It is high time to send her back to her own country, and, from the brief experience I have had of it, I'll venture to say all her captivations there will not make many victims. Three o'clock already," said he, with surprise, "and I had meant to be at Dalradern early." He rung and ordered the carriage. It had been at the door for above an hour. Strange how the morning should have slipped over; had it been real business, what a deal he could have transacted in the time; but these little "peddling negotiations," so he called them, ran away with a man's time before he was aware of it. As he passed through the hall, he saw through a partly opened door the two girls—they were seated at a table, with their heads bent over a map.

"Yes," said Ada, "this is the way papa mentions; here is Marseilles, and here, if the sea be rough, is the road we shall have to travel, all along the coast by Nice and Genoa. Oh, don't you wish it may be bad weather, Kate?"

M'Kinlay bent his head, but could not catch the words she spoke.

"And I used to fancy you would like it all more than ever I did myself," said Ada, in a tone of reproach.

"It is your lot to enjoy everything, and to have everything to enjoy," said Kate; "and mine is—no matter what it is—let us have a stroll in the garden."

M'Kinlay had just time to move on ere they arose, and, passing out, he got into the carriage and drove away.

CHAPTER XXX.

SCANDAL.

It was half-past four, as Mr. M'Kinlay drove into the courtyard at Dalradern. Sir Within's note had said four o'clock, an early dinner, and Sir Within himself could be seen, at an oriel window, watch in hand, as the carriage passed under the arched entrance. Now, though it was part of Mr. M'Kinlay's usual tactics never to "cheapen himself," he felt he might by possibility have erred on the opposite side on this occasion, and he prepared to make some excuses for his delay, the letters he had read, the replies he was forced to make, and such like.

The old baronet heard these apologies with a most polished urbanity; he bowed a continual acquiescence, and then ordered dinner.

"I had hoped for a little daylight, Mr. M'Kinlay," said he, "to have shown you some of my pictures, which are only worth seeing when they have got sun on them. Are you fond of the arts?"

"Passionately, Sir Within; devotedly, if a man so ignorant may dare to say so."

"Then, I must only hope for better fortune on another occasion, and that you will give me an entire morning, if you will not graciously make me a visit of some days."

"Oh, sir."

"I think," continued he—"I think I could requite you. My Van Eyks are accounted the best of any private collection; and one at least of my Albert Durers will bear comparison with any in the Munich Gallery."

M'Kinlay muttered something that sounded as if he were firmly persuaded of the fact.

"I know," added Sir Within, "that this sounds a little boastful; but when I shall have told you how I came by this picture—it is called the Queen's Martyrdom, and represents the

Queen Beatrice of Bohemia on a balcony while her lover is going to the scaffold; the king, her husband, has ordered her to throw to him the garland or wreath, which was the privilege of nobles to wear in their last moments—and, I say, when I tell you the history of the picture, you will, perhaps, acquit me of vainglory; and also, when you see it, you will render me a greater service by deciding whether the headsman has not been painted by Cranach. How I wish we had a little daylight, that I might show it to you!"

How grateful was M'Kinlay to the sun for his setting on that evening; never was darkness more welcome, even to him who prayed for night—or Blucher; and, secretly vowing to himself that no casualty should ever catch him there before candlelight, he listened with a bland attention, and pledged his word to any amount of connoisseurship required of him. Still he hoped that this might not be "the case"—the especial case—on which Sir Within had summoned him to give counsel, for, besides being absurd, it would be worse—it would be unprofitable. It was a pleasant interruption to this "art conversation" when dinner was announced. Now did Mr. M'Kinlay find himself more at home when appealed to for his judgment on brown sherry, and the appropriate period at which "Amontillado" could be introduced; but he soon discovered he was in the presence of a master. Dinner-giving was the science of his craft, and Sir Within belonged to that especial school who have always maintained that Brillat Savarin is more to be relied upon than Grotius, and M. Ude a far abler ally than Puffendorf. It was the old envoy's pleasure on this occasion to put forth much of his strength; both the dinner and the wine were exquisite, and when the entertainment closed with some choice "Hermitage," which had been an imperial present, the lawyer declared that it was not a dinner to which he had been invited but a banquet.

"You must run down in your next vacation, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay, and give me a week. I don't know if you are a sportsman?"

"Not in the least, sir. I neither shoot, ride, nor fish."

"Nor do I, and yet I like a country life, as a sort of interlude in existence."

"With a house like this, Sir Within, what life can compare with it?"

"One can at least have tranquillity," sighed Sir Within, with an air that made it difficult to say whether he considered it a blessing or the reverse.

"There ought to be a good neighbourhood, too, I should say. I passed some handsome places as I came along."

"Yes, there are people on every hand, excellent people, I have not a doubt; but they neither suit me, nor *I them.* Their ways are not mine, nor are their ideas, their instincts, nor their prejudices. The world, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay, is unfortunately, wider than a Welsh county, though they will not believe it here."

"You mean, then, Sir Within, that they are local, and narrow-minded in their notions?"

"I don't like to say that, any more than I like to hear myself called a libertine; but I suppose, after all, it is what we both come to." The air of self-accusation made the old envoy perfectly triumphant, and, as he passed his hand across his brow and smiled blandly, he seemed to be recalling to mind innumerable successes of the past. "To say truth, diplomacy is not the school for dévots."

"I should think not, indeed, sir," said M'Kinlay.

"And that is what these worthy folk cannot or will not see. Wounds and scars are the necessary incidents of a soldier's life; but people will not admit that there are moral injuries which form the accidents of a minister's life, and to which he must expose himself as fearlessly as any soldier that ever marched to battle. What do these excellent creatures here—who have never experienced a more exciting scene than a cattle show, nor faced a more captivating incident than a bishop's visitation—know of the trials, the seductions—the irresistible seductions— of the great world? Ah, Mr. M'Kinlay, I could lay bare a very strange chapter of humanity, were I to tell even one-fourth of my own experiences."

"An instructive one too, I should say, sir."

"In one sense, yes; certainly instructive. You see, Mr. M'Kinlay, with respect to life it is thus: Men in your profession become conversant with all the material embarrassments and difficulties of families; they know of that crushing bond, or that ruinous mortgage, of the secret loan at fifty per cent., or the drain of hush money to stop a disclosure, just as the doctor knows of the threatened paralysis or the spreading aneurism; but we men of the world—men of the world *par excellence*—read humanity in its moral aspect; we study its conflicts, its trials, its weakness, and its fall— I say fall, because such is the one and inevitable end of every struggle."

"This is a sad view, a very sad view," said M'Kinlay, who, probably to fortify himself against the depression he felt, drank freely of strong Burgundy.

"Not so in one respect. It makes us more tolerant, more charitable. There is nothing ascetic in our judgment of people —we deplore but we forgive."

"Fine, sir, very fine—a noble sentiment!" said the lawyer, whose utterance was not by any means so accurate as it had been an hour before.

"Of that relentless persecution of women, for instance, such as you practise it here in England, the great world knows positively nothing. In your blind vindictiveness you think of nothing but penalties, and you seem to walk over the battle-field of life with no other object or care than to search for the wounded and hold them up to shame and torture. Is it not so?"

"I am sure you are right. We are all fal—fal—li—ble, not a doubt of it," muttered M'Kinlay to himself.

"And remember," continued Sir Within, "it is precisely the higher organizations, the more finely-attuned temperaments that are most exposed, and which, from the very excellence of their nature, demand our deepest care and solicitude. With what pains, for instance, would you put together the smashed fragments of a bit of rare Sèvres, concealing the junctures and hiding the flaws, while you would not waste a moment on a piece of vulgar crockery."

"Pitch it out o' window at once!" said M'Kinlay, with an almost savage energy.

"So it is. It is with this precious material, finely formed, beautiful in shape, and exquisite in colour, the world has to deal; and how natural that it should treat it with every solicitude and every tenderness. But the analogy holds further. Every connoisseur will tell you that the cracked or fissured porcelain is scarcely diminished in value by its fracture; that when skilfully repaired it actually is almost, if not altogether, worth what it was before."

M'Kinlay nodded; he was not quite clear how the conversation had turned upon porcelain, but the wine was exquisite, and he was content.

"These opinions of mine meet little mercy down here, Mr. M'Kinlay; my neighbours call them Frenchified immoralities, and fifty other hard names; and as for myself, they do not scruple to aver that I am an old rake, come back to live on the recollection of his vices. I except, of course, our friends the Vyners—they judge, and they treat me differently; they are a charming family."

"Charming!" echoed the lawyer, and seeming by his action to drink their health to himself.

"You know the old line, 'He jests at wounds that never felt a scar;' and so have I ever found that it is only amongst those who have suffered one meets true sympathy. What is this curious story"—here he dropped into a low, confidential voice

—"about Miss C.? It is a bygone now-a-days; but how was it? She was to have married a man who had a wife living! or, she did marry him, and discovered it as they were leaving the church? I forget exactly how it went—I mean the story—for I know nothing as to the fact."

M'Kinlay listened, and through the dull fog of his besotted faculties a faint flickering of light seemed struggling to pierce. The misanthrope at Arran—the once friend, now banished for ever—the name that never was to be uttered—the mystery to be kept from all—and then Georgina's own sudden outburst of passion on the evening they parted, when he blundered out something about a reparation to Luttrell. All this, at first confusedly, but by degrees more clearly, passed in review before him, and he thought he had dropped upon a very black page of family history. Though the wine of which he had drunk freely had addled, it had not overcome him, and, with the old instincts of his calling, he remembered how all-important it is, when extracting evidence, to appear in full possession of all the facts.

"How, in the name of wonder, Sir Within," said he, after a long pause—"how did it ever chance that this story reached you?"

"Mr. M'Kinlay, my profession, like your own, has its secret sources of information, and, like you, we hear a great deal, and we believe very little of it."

"In the present case," said M'Kinlay, growing clearer every minute, "I take it you believe nothing."

"How old is Miss O'Hara?" asked Sir Within, quietly.

"Oh, Sir Within, you surely don't mean to——"

"To what, Mr. M'Kinlay,—what is it that I cannot possibly intend?" said he, smiling.

"You would not imply that—that there was anything there?" said he, blundering into an ambiguity that might not commit him irretrievably.

"Haven't I told you, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay," said he, with an air of easy familiarity, "that if I am somewhat sceptical, I am very charitable? I can believe a great deal, but I can forgive everything."

"And you really do believe this?" asked M'Kinlay.

"Something of it; about as much as Mr. M'Kinlay believes. Kate O'Hara is——let me see," muttered he, half aloud; "I was at Stuttgard; it was the winter Prince Paul died; we had a court mourning, and there were no festivities. The Legations received a few intimates, and we exchanged all the contents of our letters—that was sixteen or seventeen years ago; the young lady, I take it, is not far from fifteen."

"Good heavens, Sir Within, you want to establish a distinct link between this story and the age of the young girl!"

"That is too legal a view, Mr. M'Kinlay; we diplomatists deal in another fashion—we speculate, we never specify. We always act as if everything were possible, and nothing certain; and in our very uncertainty lies our greatest security."

"At all events, you don't believe one word of this story?"

"When a gentleman so intimately connected with all the secret details of a family history as you are, instead of showing me where and how I am in error, limits himself to an appeal to my incredulity, my reply is, his case is a weak one. She is a most promising creature; she was here yesterday, and I declare I feel half ashamed of myself for thinking her more attractive than my dear old favourite, Ada. What are you going to do about her?"

The suddenness of this question startled M'Kinlay not much, if at all. "Did the old baronet know of the Vyners' plans?—was he in reality more deeply in their confidence than himself?"—was the lawyer's first thought. It was clear enough he knew something, whatever that something might mean. To fence with such a master of his weapon would be a lamentable blunder, and M'Kinlay determined on frankness.

"It is the very subject on which I want to consult you, Sir Within. The case is a nice one, and requires nice treatment. The Vyners have determined she is not to go out to Italy."

"Do they give their reason?"

"No, not exactly a reason. They think—that is, Miss Courtenay thinks—all this is, of course, in strict confidence, Sir Within?"

The old minister bowed an acquiescence, with his hand on his heart.

"As I was observing, then," resumed M'Kinlay, "Miss Courtenay thinks that the united education scheme has not been a success; that Miss O'Hara has contrived, somehow, to usurp more than her share; that from natural quickness, perhaps, in learning, a greater aptitude for acquirement, she has not merely outstripped but discouraged Miss Vyner——"

The incredulous surprise that sat on the old baronet's face stopped M'Kinlay in his explanation, and he said: "You don't appear to believe in this, Sir Within?"

"Don't you think, sir," said the old envoy, "that sitting here *tête-à-tête* as we do now, we could afford to be candid and frank with each other? Does it not strike you that you and I are very like men who could trust each other?"

There was a fine shade of flattery in the collocation that touched the lawyer. It was not every day that he saw himself "brigaded" in such company, and he reddened slightly as he accepted the compliment.

"Let us, then," resumed the old minister, "let us leave to one side all mention of these young ladies' peculiar talents and capacities; come to the practical fact that, for reasons into which we are not to inquire, they are to be separated. What do you mean to do by Miss O'Hara?"

Mr. M'Kinlay paused for a few seconds, and then, with the air of one who could not subdue himself to any caution, said: "Whatever you suggest, Sir Within—anything that you advise. You see, sir," said he, turning down the corner of Vyner's letter, and handing it to him to read, "this is what he says: 'Tell Sir Within from me, that I will accept any trouble he shall take with Miss O'H. as a direct personal favour.'"

Sir Within bowed. It was not the first time he had been shown a "strictly confidential despatch" that meant nothing.

"I think—that is, I suspect—I apprehend the situation," said he. "The Vyners want to stand in the *statu quo ante;* they have made a mistake, and they see it. Now what does Mr. M'Kinlay suggest?"

"I'd send her back, Sir Within."

"Back! Where? To whom?"

"To her friends."

"To her friends! My dear M'Kinlay, I thought we had disposed of all that part of the case. Let us be frank—it *does* save so much time; for friends, read Mr. Luttrell. Now, what if he say, 'No; you have taken her away, and by your teaching and training unfitted her for such a life as she must lead here; I cannot receive her?'"

"I did not mean Mr. Luttrell; I really spoke of the girl's family——"

"You are a treasure of discretion, sir," said Sir Within; "but permit me to observe, that the excess of caution often delays a negotiation. *You* say that she cannot go to Italy, and *I* say she can as little return to Ireland—at least without Mr. Luttrell's acquiescence. Now for the third course?"

"This school Sir Gervais speaks of in Paris," said M'Kinlay, fumbling for the passage in the letter, for he was now so confused and puzzled that he was very far from feeling calm. "Here is the address—Madame Gosselin, Rue Neuve St. Augustin, Paris. Sir Gervais thought that—with of course your approval—this would be the best course we could take. She would be well treated, well educated, cared for, and eventually qualified to be a governess—if she should not chance to marry."

"Yes, yes," said Sir Within, slowly, as he pondered over the other's words, "there is much in what you say, and the remarkable fact is, that *they do*, very often, make admirable wives."

Who were the "they" he referred to, as a category, M'Kinlay did not dare to inquire, but assented by a smile and a bow.

"Curious it is," said the old man, reflectively, "to mark how generations alternate, as if it were decreed that the world should not make any distinct progress, but oscillate between vice and virtue—virtue and vice. The respectable father and the scampish son being the counterpoise for the rakish mamma and the discreet daughter."

To what such a reflection could be thought to apply, Mr. M'Kinlay had not the vaguest conception; but it is only fair to add, that his faculties were never throughout the interview at their clearest.

"My chief difficulty is this, sir," said the lawyer, rising to an effort that might show he had an opinion and a will of his own; "Sir Gervais requests me to convey his daughter as far as Marseilles; he names an early day to meet us there, so that really there is very little time—I may say no time, if we must start by Monday next."

Sir Within made no reply, and the other went on:—

"Suppose I take this girl over to Paris with us, and the school should be full, and no vacancy to be had? Suppose they might object—I have heard of such things—to receive as a pupil one who had not made any preliminary inquiries."

"Your position might become one of great embarrassment, Mr. M'Kinlay, and to relieve you so far as in me lies, I would propose that until you have taken the necessary steps to ensure Miss O'Hara's reception, she should remain under the charge of my housekeeper here, Mrs. Simcox. She is a most excellent person, and kindness itself. When you have satisfied yourself by seeing Madame Gosselin at Paris, as to all matters of detail, I shall very probably have had time to receive a reply to the letter I will write to my co-trustee, Mr. Luttrell, and everything can be thus arranged in all due form."

"I like all of your plans, sir, but the last step. I have confessed to you that Sir Gervais Vyner had strictly enjoined me not to mention Mr. Luttrell's name."

"You also mentioned to me, if I mistake not, that the young girl's friends, whoever they might be supposed to be, were to be consulted as to any future arrangements regarding her. Now, do you seriously mean to tell me that you are going to address yourself to the old peasant, who assumed to be her grandfather, and who frankly owned he couldn't read?"

"I do think, Sir Within, that old Malone—that is the man's name—ought to be informed, and, indeed, consulted as to any step we take."

"A model of discreet reserve you certainly are," said Sir Within, smiling graciously. "You will write to him, therefore, and say that Miss Kate O'Hara is, for the time being, under the roof of one of her guardians, Sir Within Wardle, preparatory to her being sent to a school at Paris. You may, if you think it advisable, ask him for a formal acquiescence to our plan, and if he should desire it, add, he may come over here and see her. I suspect, Mr. M'Kinlay, we cannot possibly be called on to carry out the illusion of relationship beyond this."

"But he is her grandfather; I assure you he is."

"I believe whatever Mr. M'Kinlay asks me to believe. With the inner convictions which jar against my credulity, you shall have no cause of complaint, sir; they are, and they shall be, inoperative. To prove this, I will beg of you to enclose ten pounds on my part to this old peasant, in case he should like to come over here."

"I am sure Sir Gervais will be deeply obliged by all your kindness in this matter."

"It is my pleasure and my duty both."

"What a rare piece of fortune it was for her, that made you her guardian."

"Only one of them, remember, and that I am now acting, perforce, without my colleague. I own, Mr. M'Kinlay, I am red tapist enough not to like all this usurped authority, but you have tied me up to secrecy."

"Not I, Sir Within. It was Sir Gervais who insisted on this."

"I respect his wishes, for perhaps I appreciate their necessity. You see some sort of objection to my plan, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said the old diplomatist, with a cunning twinkle of the eye. "What is it?"

"None, sir, none whatever," said the lawyer, rapidly.

"Yes, yes, you do; be candid, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay. What we say to each other here will never figure in a Bluebook."

"I did not see a positive objection, Sir Within; I only saw what might be an embarrassment."

"In what shape?"

"I am completely in your hands, Sir Within Wardle; but such is my confidence in you, I will not withhold anything. Here is the difficulty I speak of; Miss Courtenay, who never favoured the project about this girl, likes it now less than ever, and I do not feel quite certain that she will be satisfied with any arrangement short of sending her back to the obscurity she came from."

"I can understand and appreciate that wish on her part, but then there is no need that I should suspect it, Mr. M'Kinlay. The habits of my profession have taught me to bear many things in mind without seeming to act upon the knowledge. Now, the shelter that I propose to afford this young lady need not excite any mistrust. You will tell Sir Gervais that the arrangement met with your approval. That it was, in your opinion, the best of the alternatives that offered, and that Sir Within Wardle has, on the present occasion, a double happiness afforded him—he obliges friends whom he values highly, and he consults his own personal gratification."

In the last few words the old envoy had resumed a tone familiar to him in the days when he dictated despatches to a secretary, and sent off formal documents to be read aloud to dignitaries great and potent as himself; and Mr. M'Kinlay was duly impressed thereat.

"In all that relates to Mr. Luttrell I am to rely upon you, sir," said Sir Within, and Mr. M'Kinlay bowed his acquiescence. "I am certain that you smile at my excess of formality," continued the old minister. "These particularities are second nature to us;" and it was clear as he said "*us*," that he meant an order whose ways and habits it would be a heresy to dispute. "If you will not take more wine, let us go into the drawing-room. A drawing-room without ladies, Mr. M'Kinlay," said he with a sigh; "but, perhaps, one of these days—who knows?—we may be fortunate enough to receive you here more gracefully."

Mr. M'Kinlay, in any ordinary presence, would have responded by one of those little jocose pleasantries which are supposed to be fitting on such occasions; he had tact enough, however, to perceive that Sir Within would not have been the man for a familiarity of this sort, so he merely smiled, and bowed a polite concurrence with the speech.

"It will be as well, perhaps, if I wrote a few lines to Mademoiselle Heinzleman, and also to Miss O'Hara herself, and if you will excuse me for a few minutes, I will do so."

The old minister despatched his two notes very speedily, and, with profuse assurances of his "highest considerations," he took leave of the lawyer, and sat down to ruminate over their late conversation, and the step he had just taken.

Mr. M'Kinlay, too, meditated as he drove homewards, but not with all that clearness of intellect he could usually bestow upon a knotty point. Like most men in his predicament, to be puzzled was to be angered, and so did he inveigh to himself against "that crotchety old humbug, with his mare's nest of a secret marriage." Not but there was a "something somewhere," which he, M'Kinlay, would certainly investigate before he was many weeks older. "Miss Georgina's manner to me used to undergo very strange vacillations—very strange ones indeed. Yes, there was something 'in it'—surely something."

While Kate O'Hara was still sleeping the next morning, Ada hurried into her room, and threw her arms around her, sobbing bitterly, as the hot tears ran down her cheeks. "Oh, Kate, my own dear, darling Kate, what is this dreadful thing I have just heard? Lisette has just told me that she is not to pack your clothes—that you are not coming with me abroad."

Kate raised herself on one arm, and pushed back her hair from her brow, her large eyes wearing for an instant the meaningless look of one suddenly awakened from sleep.

"Do you hear me—do you know what I am saying, dearest?" asked Ada, as she kissed her, and drew her towards her.

"Tell it me again," said she, in a low, distinct voice.

"Lisette says that mademoiselle has orders—from whom I cannot say—that you are to remain in England, to go to a school, or to live with a governess, or to return to Ireland, or something; but whatever it is that we are to be separated," and again her grief burst forth and choked her words.

"I knew this would come one day," said Kate, slowly, but without any touch of emotion. "It was a caprice that took me, and it is a caprice that deserts me."

"Oh, don't say that, Kate, of my own dear papa, who loves you almost as he loves me!"

"I can have nothing but words of gratitude for him, Ada, and for your mother."

"You mean, then——"

"No matter what I mean, my sweet Ada. It may be, after all, a mercy. Who is to say whether, after another year of this sort of life, its delicious happiness should have so grown into my nature that it would tear my very heart-strings to free myself from its coils? Even now there were days when I forgot I was a peasant girl, without home, or friends, or fortune."

"Oh, Kate, you will break my heart if you speak this way!"

"Well, then, to talk more cheerfully. Will not that pretty hat yonder, with the long blue feather, look wondrous picturesque, as I follow the goats up the steep sides of Inchegora? and will not that gauzy scarf be a rare muffle as I gather the seaweed below the cliffs of Bengore?"

"Kate, Kate!" sobbed Ada, "how cruel you are! You know, too, that dear papa does not mean this. It is not to hardship and privation he would send you."

"But there are reverses, Ada, a hundred times worse than any change of food or dress. There are changes of condition that seem to rend one's very identity. Here, I had respect, attention, deference, and now, I go, Heaven knows where, to render these tributes to Heaven knows whom. Tell me of yourself, my sweet Ada. It is a far brighter theme to dwell on."

"No, no; not if I must part with you," said she, sobbing; "but you will write to me, my own darling Kate! We shall write to each other continually till we meet again?"

"If I may. If I be permitted," said Kate, gravely.

"What do you—what can you mean?" cried Ada, wildly. "You speak as though some secret enemy were at work to injure you here, where you have found none but friends who love you."

"Don't you know, my dear Ada, that love, like money, has a graduated coinage, and that what would be a trifle to the rich man, would make the wealth of a poor one? The love your friends bear me is meted out by station; mind, dearest, I'm not complaining of this. Let us talk of Italy, rather; how happy you ought to be there!"

"If I but had you, my own dearest——"

"There, I hear mademoiselle coming. Bathe your eyes, dear Ada; or, better still, run away before she sees you."

Ada took this last counsel; but scarcely had she left by one door, than mademoiselle entered by another.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DERRYVARAGH.

A DREARY day of December it was, and the rain was pouring heavily, pitilessly down the dark gorge of Derryvaragh. The roar of mountain rivulets, swollen to torrents, filled the air, and the crashing sounds of falling timber blended with the noise of troubled waters. Beautiful as that landscape would be on a day of bright sunshine, it seemed now the dreariest scene the eye could rest on. The clouds lay low on the mountain-sides, thickening the gloom that spread around, while yellow currents of water crossed and recrossed on every side, rending the earth, and laying bare the roots of tall trees.

From a window in O'Rorke's inn, O'Rorke himself and old Malone watched the devastation and ruin of the flood; for even there, in that wild region forgotten of men, there were little patches of cultivation—potato-gardens and small fields of oats or rye—but through which now the turbid water tore madly, not leaving a trace of vegetation as it went.

"And so you saw the last of it?" said O'Rorke, as he lit his pipe and sat down at the window.

"I did; there wasn't one stone on another as I came by. The walls were shaky enough before, and all the mortar washed out of them, so that when the stream came down in force, all fell down with a crash like thunder; and when I turned round there was nothing standing as high as your knee, and in five minutes even that was swept away, and now it's as bare as this floore."

"Now, mind my words, Peter Malone; as sure as you stand there, all the newspapers will be full of 'Another Outrage—More Irish Barbarism and Stupidity.' That will be the heading in big letters; and then underneath it will go on: 'The beautiful lodge that Sir Gervais Vyner had recently built in the Gap of Derryvaragh was last night razed to the ground by a party of people who seemed determined that Ireland should never rise out of the misery into which the ignorance of her natives have placed her.' That's what they'll say, and then the *Times* will take it up, and we'll have the old story about benefactor on one side, and brutality on the other; and how, for five hundred years and more, England was trying to civilize us, and that we're as great savages now—ay, or worse—than at first."

Malone clasped his worn hands together, and muttered a deep curse in Irish below his breath.

"And all our own fault," continued O'Rorke, oratorically. "'Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.' I said that on Essex Bridge to the Lord-Lieutenant himself; and look at me now—is it here, or is it this way, a patriot ought to be?"

"Isn't it the same with us all?" said Malone, sternly. "Didn't they take my grandchild away from me—the light of my eyes—and then desart her?"

"No such thing—she's better off than ever she was. She's living with a man that never was in Ireland, and mind what I say, Peter Malone, them's the only kind of English you ever get any good out of."

"What do you mane?"

"I mane that when one or two of us go over there, we're sure to be thought cute and intelligint; and the Saxon says, 'Isn't it wonderful what a clever people they are?' But if he comes here himself, and sees nothing but misery and starvation, he cries out, 'They're hopeless craytures—they live with the pig.'"

"And why wouldn't we if we had one?"

"Well, well, well," muttered the other, who never minded nor heeded the interruption, "maybe the time is coming, maybe the great day is near. Don't you know the song of the 'Shamroge in my Hat?'"

"I ne'er heerd it."

"'Tis little I care for Emancipation,
'Tis little I want such laws as that;
What I ask is, Ould Ireland to be a nation,
And myself with a shamroge in my hat."

"I wonder will the letter come to-day?" said the old man, with a weary sigh; "my heart is heavy waiting for it."

"If she sent you a ten-pound note, Peter Malone, whenever she wrote, there would be some sense and reason in your wishing for a letter; but, so well as I remember the one scrap of letter that she sent you, there was neither money nor money's worth in it."

"It was betther than goold to my heart," said Malone, with a deep feeling in his voice and look.

"Well, there, it's coming now; there's Patsey holding up a letter in his hand. Do you see him at the ford, there?"

"I don't see him, my eyes are so weak; but are ye sure of it, Tim O'Rorke? Don't decave me, for the love of the blessed Virgin."

"I'm not deceiving you; there is the boy coming along as fast as he can."

"Ay, but the letter?"

"He flourished it a minute ago, this way, for he saw me at the window."

"Open the window, and maybe he'd show it again," said the old man, trembling with eagerness.

"Faix! I'll not let the rain in. It's a nice day to have the windows open. You're eaten up with your selfishness, Peter Malone."

"Maybe I am, maybe I am," muttered the old peasant, as he sat down, and hid his face between his hands.

"And who knows where the letter will be from? Maybe it's Vyner is going to turn you out of your holding."

"So he may," sighed the other, meekly.

The Letter.

"Maybe it's the agents callin' on you to pay up for the time you were in it. Do you think that would be convanient, eh?"

"I don't care, if they did."

"I wouldn't wonder if it was trouble you were getting in about throwing down the walls of the Lodge. The police, they say, made a report about it."

"So they may; let them do their worst."

"Go round to the back. Do you think I'll open the front doore of a day like this?" screamed out O'Rorke to the messenger, who now stood without.

While he went to unbar the door, old Malone dropped on his knees, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes muttered a few words of prayer; they were in Irish, but their intense passion and fervour were but increased by the strong-sounding syllables of that strange tongue.

"There it is—from herself," said O'Rorke, throwing down the letter on the table. "Her own handwriting; 'Mr. Peter Malone, to the care of Mr. O'Rorke, Vinegar Hill, Cush-magreena, Ireland.'"

"The heavens be your bed, for the good news, Tim O'Rorke! may the Virgin watch over you for the glad heart you've given me this day."

"Wait till we see the inside of it, first. Give it to me till I open it." But the old man could not part with it so easily, but held it pressed hard to his lips.

"Give it here," said the other, snatching it rudely; "maybe you'll not be so fond of it when you know the contents."

The old man rocked to and fro in his agitation as O'Rorke broke the seal; the very sound of the wax, as it smashed, seemed to send a pang through him, as he saw the rough unfeeling way the other handled that precious thing.

"It's long enough, anyhow, Peter—one, two, three pages," said he, turning them leisurely over. Am I to read it all?"

"Every word of it, Tim O'Rorke."

"Here goes then:—

"'March 27, 18—. Dalradern Castle, N. Wales.

"'My dear old Grandfather,—I sit down to write you a very long letter——'"

"God bless her! God bless the darlin'!" said the old man, interrupting; "show me the words, Tim—show them to me."

"Indeed I will not do any such thing. It's just as much as I'll do is to read it out—'a very long letter, and I hope and trust it will serve for a very long time, and save me, besides, from the annoyance of your friend and secretary, Mr. O'Rorke.' Listen to this, Peter Malone,—'from your secretary, Mr.

O'Rorke, who, I suppose, having no treason to occupy him, is good enough to bestow his leisure upon me.' Did you ever hear more impudence than that in all your born days? Did you believe she'd be bowld enough to insult the man that condescended to serve her?"

"She's young, she's young, Tim. Would you have her as wise as you and me? The crayture."

"I'd have her with a civil tongue in her head. I'd have her respect and regard and rev'rance her superiors. And I'm one of them."

"Go on; read more," muttered the old man.

"It's not so easy, with a throat on fire, and a tongue swelled with passion. I tell you, Peter Malone, I know that girl well, and what's more, she never deceived me. It's like yesterday to me, the day she stood up here to my own face, and said, 'I wish I never set foot in your house, Tim O'Rorke.' Yes, there's the very words she used."

"Wasn't she a child, a poor little child?" said Malone, in a humble, almost supplicating voice.

"She was a child in years, but she had the daring of a woman, that no man would ever frighten."

"Read on, avick, read on, and God bless you," said the other, wiping away the big drops that stood on his brow.

O'Rorke read on: "'I know, grandfather, it is very natural you should like to hear of me——'"

A deep sigh and low muttered prayer broke here from the old man.

"'—to hear of me; but when once assured that I was well and happy, I hoped and believed you would cease to make such inquiries as fill O'R.'s letters——'"

"What does she mean?" broke in Malone.

"Listen, and maybe you'll hear;" and he read:—

"'—For it cannot possibly be a matter of interest to you to hear that I read books you never saw, speak with people you never met, and talk of things, places, and persons that are all just as strange to you as if you were walking on a different earth from this.'"

"Read that again."

"I will not. 'Tis as much as I can to say it once. Listen:—

"'You ask, Am I happy? and I answer, If I am not, is it in your power to make me so? You want to know, Do I like the life I lead? and I ask you, If it should be that I did not like it, do you think I'd like to go back to rags, misery, and starvation? Do you believe that I can forget the cold, cutting wind, and the rain, and the snow-drift of Strathmore, or that I don't remember the long days I shivered on the cliffs of Kilmacreenon?

They all come back to me, grandfather, in my dreams, and many a morning I awake, sobbing over miseries that, no matter what may be my fortune, have left a dark spot on my heart for life.' "

"The darlin' jewel! I hope not," muttered Malone, as his lips trembled with emotion. "Read on, O'Rorke."

" 'Take it for granted, that you need never fret about me.' That's true, anyhow, Peter; and she means it to say, 'Don't bother yourself about one that will never trouble her head about *you!*' "

"Go on with the readin'," grumbled out Malone.

" 'Though I cannot answer one-fourth of your questions, I will tell you so much; I am better off here than at Sir G. V.'s. I am my own mistress; and, better still, the mistress of all here. Sir Within leaves everything at my orders. I drive out, and dress, and ride, and walk, just as I please. We see no company whatever, but there is so much to do, I am never lonely. I have masters if I wish for them—sometimes I do—and I learn many things, such as riding, driving, &c., which people never do well if they only have picked up by chance opportunity. You ask, What is to be the end of all this? or, as Mr. O'Rorke says, What will ye make of it? I reply, I don't know, and I don't much trouble my head about it; because I *do* know, Peter Malone, that if I am not interrupted and interfered with, all will go well with me, though certainly I can neither tell how, or where, or why. Another thing is equally clear: neither of us, dear grandfather, can be of much use to the other.' "

"What's that?" cried the old man; "read it again."

" 'Neither of us can be of much use to the other.' That's plain talking, anyhow, Peter. She's a young lady that makes herself understood, I must say that!"

"I never 'dragged' on her for a farthin'," said Malone, with a mournful sigh.

"Lucky for you, Peter; lucky for you!"

"Nor I wouldn't, if I was starvin'," said he, with a fierce energy.

"Lucky for you, I say again!"

"You mane, that she wouldn't help me, Tim O'Rorke. You mane, that she'd turn her back on her ould grandfather. That's as it may be. God knows best what's in people's hearts. I can't tell, nor you either; but this I can tell, and I can swear to it—that for all the good she could do me—ten, ay fifty times told—I'd not disgrace her, nor bring her to the shame of saying, 'That ould man there in the ragged frieze coat and the patched shoes, that's my mother's father.' "

"If it's to your humility you're trusting, Peter, my man," said the other, scoffingly, "you've made a great mistake in your granddaughter; but let us finish the reading. Where was it I left off? Yes, here, 'Neither of us of much use to the other. You want to know what intercourse exists between the Vyners and myself——' The Vyners! Ain't we grand!" cried O'Rorke. "The Vyners! I wonder she don't say, 'between the Vyners and the O'Haras.'"

"Go on, will you?" said Malone, impatiently.

"'—it is soon told—there is none; and what's more, Sir Within no longer hears from or writes to them. Although, therefore, my own connection with this family has ceased, there is no reason why this should influence yours; and I would, above all things, avoid, if I were you, letting *my* fortunes interfere with *your* own. You can, and with truth, declare that you had nothing whatever to do with any step I have taken; that I went my own way, and never asked you for the road. My guardian, Sir Within, wrote, it is true, to Mr. Luttrell, of Arran, but received no answer. It will be my duty to write to him in a few days, and not improbably with the same result.

"'You seem anxious to know if I have grown tall, and whether I am still like what I was as a child. I believe I may say, Yes, to both questions; but I shall send you, one of these days, a sketch from a picture of me, which the painter will this year exhibit at the Academy. It is called a great likeness. And last of all, you ask after my soul. I am sorry, dear grandfather, that I cannot be as certain of giving you as precise intelligence on this point as I have done on some others. It may satisfy you, however, perhaps, if I say I have not become a Protestant——'"

"God bless her for that!" said Malone, fervently.

"'—although our excellent housekeeper here, Mrs. Simcox, assures me that such a change would be greatly to my advantage, in this world and in that to come; but if her knowledge of the former is the measure of what she knows of the latter, I shall require other counsel before I read my recantation.'"

"What does she mean by that?" asked Malone.

"'Tis another way of saying 'I won't play a card till I see the money down on the table.'"

"How can that be? Which of us knows what's going to happen here or in the next world?"

"Maybe the Protestants does! Perhaps that's the reason they're always so dark and downcast now."

Malone shook his head in despair; the problem was too much for him, and he said, "Read on."

"'That I am not without the consolations of the Church you will be glad to hear, as I tell you that a French priest, the

Abbé Gerard, dines here every Sunday, and sings with me in the evening.' "

"Sings with her. What makes them sing?"

"Religion, of coorse," said O'Rorke, with a grin of derision. "Listen to me, Peter Malone," cried he, in a stern voice; "when people is well off in the world, they no more think of going to heaven the way you and I do, than they'd think of travellin' a journey on a low-backed car."

"Go on with the reading," muttered Malone.

"I have read enough of it, Peter Malone. You are cute enough to see by this time what a fine-hearted, generous, loving creature you have for a granddaughter. At all events, the dose you've taken now ought to be enough for a day. So put up the physic"—here he handed him the letter—"and whenever you feel in want of a little more, come back, and I'll measure it out for you!"

"You're a hard man, you're a hard man, Mr. O'Rorke," said the old fellow, as he kissed the letter twice fervently, and then placed it in his bosom.

"I'm a hard man because I read you out her own words, just as she wrote them."

"You're a hard man, or you'd not want to crush one as old and feeble as me." And so saying, he went his way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. M'KINLAY IN ITALY.

As there are periods in life, quiet and tranquil periods, in which the mind reverts to the past, and dwells on bygones, so in story-telling there are little intervals in which a brief retrospect is pardonable, and it is to one of these I would now ask my reader's attention.

There was not anything very eventful in Mr. M'Kinlay's journey across Europe with Ada and her governess. They met with no other adventures than occur to all travellers by land or by water; but on arriving at Marseilles, a letter from Lady Vyner apprised them that Sir Gervais was slightly indisposed, and requested Mr. M'Kinlay would complete his kindness by giving them his company and protection as far as Genoa, at a short distance from which city, and in one of those little sheltered nooks of the Riviera, they had now established themselves in a villa.

It is but truthful to own, that the lawyer did not comply with this request either willingly or gracefully. He never liked the Continent, he was an indifferent linguist, he detested the cookery, and fancied that the wines poisoned him. Mademoiselle Heinzleman, too, was fussy, meddling, and officious, presuming, at least he thought so, on being in an element more her own. And as for Ada, grief at separating from Kate had made her so indifferent and apathetic, that she neither enjoyed the journey or took any interest in the new scenes and objects around her. Mr. M'Kinlay, therefore, was in no mood to proceed farther; he was tired of it all. But, besides this, he was not quite certain that he had done the right thing by placing Kate O'Hara at Dalradern; or that in so doing he had carried out the very vague instructions of Miss Courtenay. Not that the lawyer saw his way at all in the whole affair. The absurd suspicion of the old envoy about some secret contract, or marriage, or some mysterious bond, he could afford to deride; but, unhappily, he could not as easily forget, and some doubts—very ungenerous and ungallant doubts they were—would cross his mind, that Miss Georgina Courtenay's favour to himself, in some way or other, depended on the changeful fortunes of some other "issue," of which he knew nothing. "She means to accept me if she can get nothing better," was the phrase that he found on his lips when he awoke, and heard himself muttering as he dropped off asleep at night; and, after all, the consideration was not either reassuring or flattering. Middle-aged gentlemen, even with incipient baldness and indolent "proclivities," do not fancy being consigned to the category of last resorts. They fancy—heaven help them!—that they they have their claims on regard, esteem, and something stronger too; and doubtless the delusion has its influence in fighting off, for a year or two, the inevitable admission that they have dropped out of the "van" into that veteran battalion which furnishes no more guards of honour at the Temple of Venus, nor even a sentinel at the gate. Very ungallant little sums in arithmetic, too, used he to work about Georgina's age; and it would seem strange to younger men the anxiety he felt to give her a year or two more than she had a right to. "I'm not sure she's not nearer thirty-five than thirty-two," muttered he, ill-naturedly, to himself. "Rickards said one night she was older than her sister, though the old rascal took care to come and tell me in the morning that it was a mistake." And then, by subtracting this thirty-five from another arbitrary sum, he obtained a result apparently satisfactory, being, as he termed it, the proper difference of age between man and wife. Why will not men, in their zeal for truth, take "evidence for the defence" occasionally, and ask a woman's opinion on this subject?

They arrived at last at the Villa Balbi, a grand old palace on the sea-side, where ruin and splendour were blended up together, and statues, and fountains, and frescoes struggled for the mastery over a rank growth of vegetation, that seemed to threaten enclosing the whole place in a leafy embrace. Into the deep arches that supported the terrace, the blue Mediterranean flowed with that noiseless motion of this all but tideless sea. All was silent as they drove up to the gate, for they had not been expected before the morrow. Scarcely was the door opened than Ada sprung out and disappeared up the stairs, followed as well as she might by the governess. Mr. M'Kinlay was then left alone, or, at least, with no other companionship than some three or four servants, whose attempts at English were by no means successful.

"Ah, Miller, I'm glad to see *your* face at last," said the lawyer, as Sir Gervais's valet pushed his way through the crowd; "how are all here?"

"Sir Gervais has had a bad night, sir, and we were expecting the doctor every moment. Indeed, when I heard your carriage, I thought it was he had come."

"Not seriously ill, I hope?"

"Not that, perhaps, sir; but the doctor calls it a very slow fever, and requiring great care and perfect quiet. He is not to know when Miss Ada arrives."

"And the ladies, are they well?"

"My lady's greatly tired and fatigued, sir, of course; but Miss Courtenay is well. She was just giving directions about your room, sir. She said, 'If Mr. M'Kinlay should be afraid of this fever, you can take him down to the fattore's house, and make him up a room there.'"

"Is it a fever then, Miller—a real fever?"

"They call it so, sir."

"This is all that's wanting," muttered M'Kinlay to himself. "I only need to catch some confounded disorder, now, to make this the most happy exploit of my whole life! Where is this house you speak of?"

"At the foot of the hill, sir, where you saw the clump of evergreen oaks."

"Why, it was a dirty-looking hovel, with Indian corn hung all over it."

"Well, sir, it ain't very clean to look at, but it's not so bad inside, and you can be sure of a comfortable bed."

"I don't see why I am to stop at all. I have seen Miss Ada safe to her own door; I really cannot perceive that anything more is required of me," said he to himself, as he walked up and down the terrace.

"You'd like to eat something, perhaps, sir? Supper is ready whenever you wish it."

"Yes, I'll eat a morsel; I was very hungry half an hour ago, but all this tidings of illness and infection has driven away my appetite. A vast roomy old place this appears," said he, as he followed the servant across a hall spacious as a public square, into a salon large enough to be a church.

"We have five like this, sir; and on the other floor there is one still larger and loftier."

"How long are you here?" said the lawyer, abruptly, for he was not at all in love with the mansion.

"We shall be two months here on Tuesday, and her ladyship likes it so much, Sir Gervais means to buy it."

"Well, I hope I shall not be much more than two hours in it. Let me have something to eat, and order fresh horses at the post."

"You'll see my lady, I suppose, sir?"

"Of course, if she can receive me; but I will just send up a line on my card to say that my departure at once is imperatively necessary."

Few as the words were that were required to convey this message, Mr. M'Kinlay could scarcely write them in a legible way. He was nervously afraid of an illness; but the thought of a foreign malady—a fever of some outlandish type—was a terror as great as the attack of a savage animal, of whose instinct and ways he knew nothing. All the speculations which had filled his head as he came along the road were routed at once. Love-making and marriage were all very well, but they might be purchased too dearly. A dowry that was only to be won by facing a fever, was a sorry speculation. No! he would have none of such dangerous ambitions. He had gone through enough already—he had braved shipwreck—and if needs were that he must resign the agency, better that than resign life itself.

Not even the appetizing supper that was now spread before him could dispel these gloomy thoughts. He was half afraid to eat, and he could not be sure that wine was safe under the present circumstances.

"My lady hopes to see you in the morning, sir," said the valet. "She has just lain down, having been up last night with Sir Gervais."

"I am extremely sorry. I am greatly distressed! But it is impossible for me to defer my departure. I will explain it all by a letter. Just unstrap that writing-desk, and I will write a few lines. You ordered the horses, I hope?"

"Yes, sir; they will be at the door by ten o'clock."

"Miss Courtenay knows I am here, I suppose?" said M'Kinlay, in a tone of well put-on indifference, as he opened his writing-desk and arranged his papers.

"I don't know, indeed, sir; but she has the governess in her room with her, and perhaps she has heard it from her."

Mr. M'Kinlay bit his lip with impatience; he was vexed, and he was angry. Nor altogether was it unreasonable; he had come a long journey, at considerable inconvenience, and at a time he could be ill spared from his clients; he had undergone fatigue and annoyance—the sort of annoyance which, to men who dislike the Continent, is not a trifling matter—and here he was now, about to set out again without so much as a word of thanks, not even a word of acknowledgment. What were they, or what was he, to justify such treatment? This was the somewhat irritating query to which all his self-examination reverted. "Am I a lackey!" cried he, as he threw down his pen in a passionate outburst that completely overcame him. "I suppose they think I am a lackey!" and he pushed back from the table in disgust.

"Miss Courtenay, sir, would be pleased to see you in the drawing-room, sir, whenever it was convenient," said a thin-looking damsel of unmistakably English mould.

"I will wait upon her now," said Mr. M'Kinlay, with the severe accents of an injured and indignant man. In fact, he spoke like one whose coming might be supposed to evoke sentiments of trepidation, if not of awe; and yet, after he had uttered the words, he fussed and pottered amongst his papers, arranging and settling, and undoing, in a way that to any shrewder observer than the Abigail, would have discovered a mind not by any means so bent upon peremptory action as he had assumed to bespeak.

"Will you show me the way?" said he, at last, as he locked up the writing-desk, and now followed her through room after room, till the girl stopped at a door and knocked gently. No answer was returned, and she repeated the summons, on which the maid opened the door, saying, "If you'll step inside, sir, I'll tell my mistress you are here;" and Mr M'Kinlay entered into what his first footstep informed him was a lady's boudoir. It was a small room, opening on a terrace by two windows, which were thrown wide, filling the chamber with the odour of orange-flowers to a degree positively oppressive. An alabaster lamp was the only light, and served merely to throw a sort of faint sunset-glow over the room, which seemed filled with cabinet pictures and statuettes, and had an easel in one corner with an unfinished sketch in oils upon it. The perfume of orange and magnolia was so overcoming that the lawyer moved out upon the terrace, which descended by a flight of marble steps into the sea. He sat down on these to inhale the fresh night air, for already his head was beginning to feel confused and addled by the strong odours.

He had not been many minutes there, when he heard the rustle of a lady's dress close to him, and before he could arise, Miss Courtenay moved forward and sat down beside him.

"How are you, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said she, giving him her hand cordially. "I have come to thank you for all your care of Ada, and your kindness to us all."

These very simple words were delivered with a most winning grace of look and manner. No wonder if he forgot all his irritation of a few moments before; no wonder if in the very unexpectedness of this pleasure, he felt somewhat confused; and it but needed that starlight hour, that perfumed air, that murmuring sea, and the light gauzy veil, which in Genoese mode Georgina wore in her hair, and which now floated carelessly half across his arm, to make Mr. M'Kinlay think this one of the happiest moments of his life.

After a few questions about the journey and its incidents, she went on to tell him of themselves, in that tone of easy confidence people use with their nearest friends. "It was a somewhat sad house," she said, "he had come to. Gervais"—she called him Gervais—"had caught one of those low fevers of the country, and her mother was still very poorly. Her sister, however, had benefitted by the climate, and this it was that decided them on remaining abroad. You knew, of course, that Gervais intends to buy this villa?"

"No; he had not heard of it."

"Nor that he had given up his seat in the House, and retired from public life?"

"Nor that either had he heard."

"Well, of course he means to tell you all now that he has got you out here. You will be such a comfort to him, Mr. M'Kinlay; he was longing to see an old friend again."

Mr. M'Kinlay's ears tingled with delight, and his heart throbbed high with hope, but he could only mutter out something that sounded like acknowledgment.

"He has so much to ask you about besides," she went on. "Mamma wants him to let his Wiltshire house for some years, and so retrench a little, for you know he has been rather extravagant lately."

"I have ventured on an occasional remonstrance myself, though not without feeling what a liberty I was taking."

"A liberty! Surely, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay, the kind solicitude of friendship is not a liberty. Then there have been some mines—lead or copper, I forget which, and I don't well remember whether in South Wales or Sardinia—but they have not turned out well."

"Very badly, indeed, Miss Courtenay; the shares are at thirty-two, and falling still."

"Yes; he will have to talk over all these things with you; but not for some days, of course, for he is very weak and low."

"You don't seem to know, then," said he, with a smile, "that I am going off to-night; my horses are ordered for ten o'clock."

"Impossible! Why, we have not seen you yet; surely, Mr. M'Kinlay, you couldn't leave this without seeing Gervais and my sister?" There was a reproachful tenderness in her look, and mingled expression of wounded sensibility and shame at its being confessed, that gave some trouble to the lawyer's heart; for there rankled in that crafty old heart some memories of the conversation at Dalradern; and, in his distrustfulness, he would ask himself, "What does this mean?"

"Come, Mr. M'Kinlay, say this is only a threat; do confess it was only meant to terrify."

"Oh, Miss Georgina, you cannot attach such interest to my presence here, as to speak of my departure in terms like these!"

"I don't know how others think of these things," said she, with a sort of pouting air, "but, for my own part, I cling very closely to old friendships."

Had Mr. M'Kinlay been some twenty years younger, he would, doubtless, have seized on the moment to make a declaration. The conjuncture promised well, and he would not have lost it; but Mr. M'Kinlay had arrived at the time of life in which men are more prone to speculate on the consequences of failure than on the results of success, and when they never address them to jump over the narrowest ditch without a thought of the terrible splashing they shall get if they fall in, and, worse even than the wetting, the unsympathizing comments of a malicious public.

"What is Mr. M'Kinlay pondering over so deeply?" said Georgina, as she turned her eyes full upon him; and very effective eyes they were at such a range.

"I can scarcely tell; that is, I don't well know how to tell," said he, trying to screw up his courage.

"Mr. M'Kinlay has a secret, I'm certain," said she, with a winning coquetry she was quite mistress of.

That look she gave—it was a long-dwelling look, as though she had half forgotten to take away her eyes, for ladies will sometimes fire after the enemy has struck—was too much for Mr. M'Kinlay; he forgot all his prudential reserves, and said,—

"Has not every one his secret, Miss Courtenay?"

"I suppose so," said she, carelessly.

"Has not Miss Courtenay got one?" said he, leaning forward, and trying to catch her eyes; but she had dropped them too suddenly for him.

"Not that I'm aware of," said she; and if he had been gifted with a nice ear, he would have perceived that a slight vibration marked the words as they fell.

"By the way," said M'Kinlay—a most unlucky *á propos*—"have I your perfect approval in my arrangement for that young Irish lady—or girl—Miss O'Hara?"

Now the words "by the way," had so completely touched her to the quick, that for an instant her face became crimson.

"If you will first of all tell me what the arrangements are," said she, with a forced calm, "perhaps I may be able to say if I like them."

"Has mademoiselle not told you anything?"

"Mademoiselle has told me, simply, that Mr. M'Kinlay assumed the whole responsibility of the case, and neither counselled with her nor divulged his intentions."

"Ah, that was not quite fair; I really must say that mademoiselle did not represent me as I think I merit. It was a sort of case perfectly new to me. It was not very easy to see one's way. I could not make out whether you would all be better pleased by some costly arrangement for the girl, or by having her sent straight back to where she came from. The mystery that hung over——" he paused and stammered; he had said what he had not intended, and he blundered in his attempt to recall it. "I mean," added he, "that mystery that the old diplomatist insists on connecting with her."

"As how?" said Georgina, in a low, soft voice, intensely insinuating in its cadence—"as how?"

"It's not very easy to say how, so much of what he said was vague, so much hypocritical; and, indeed, so much that seemed——" He stopped, confused, and puzzled how to go on.

"So that you had a long conversation together on this topic?"

"An entire evening. I dined with him alone, and we spoke of very little else as we sat over our wine."

"I wish you could remember what he said. Don't you think you could recall some at least of it?"

"I can't say that I could, and for this reason: that he kept always interpolating little traits of what he knew of life, and all his vast and varied experiences of human nature. These sort of men are rather given to this."

"Are they?" asked she; and it was not easy to say whether her accents implied a simple curiosity, or a dreamy indifference. Mr. M'Kinlay accepted them in the former sense, and with some pomposity continued:—

"Yes; I have frequently remarked this tone in them, as well as the tendency to see twice as much in everything as it really contains."

"Indeed!" said she, and now her voice unmistakably indicated one who listened with eager attention to the words of wisdom. "Did he show this tendency on the occasion you speak of?"

"Markedly, most markedly. It is very strange that I cannot give you a more accurate account of our interveiw; but he addled my head about pictures and early art; and then, though always temperate, his wine was exquisite. In fact, I carried away a most confused impression of all that took place between us."

"You remember, however, the arrangements that were settled on. What were they?"

"The great point of all, the one you insisted on, I was, I may say, premptory upon."

"Which was that?"

"That she could not come abroad; as I said to Sir Within: 'We must negotiate on this basis; here is Miss Courtenay's letter, these are her words;' and I showed him the turn-down —only the turn-down—of your note."

Had there been light enough to remark it, Mr. M'Kinlay would have seen that Miss Courtenay's face became deadly pale, and her lips trembled with repressed anger.

"Well, and then?" said she, with a faint voice.

"He cut the Gordian knot at once, my dear Miss Courtenay," continued he, in a sort of sprightly tone; "he said, 'There need be no difficulty in the matter. I can act here *ex-officio;*' he meant by that he was her guardian. 'I will write to her,' said he, 'and if she prefers to remain here ——'"

"Remain where?" gasped she out, with a great effort to seem calm and composed.

"At Dalradern Castle, at his own house; 'if she likes this better than a Paris pension, or an Irish cabin, it is quite at her service."'

"But, of course, you replied the thing was impossible; such an arrangement couldn't be. It would be indelicate, improper, indecent?"

"I didn't say all that; but I hinted that as Sir Within was a bachelor, there were difficulties——"

"Difficulties, sir! What do you mean by difficulties? Is it possible that one evening's companionship with a person hardened by a long life of 'libertinage' can have so warped your moral sense as to render you blind to so obvious a shame as this?"

"He said his housekeeper——"

"His housekeeper! Am I to believe, sir, that you listened to all this with the patience with which you repeat it now, and that no feeling of propriety roused you to an indignant rejection of such a scheme? Was his claret or his burgundy so insinuating as this?"

"When he said housekeeper——"

"Pray, sir, do not push my endurance beyond all limits. I have given a very wide margin for the influence of Sir Within's machinations; but, bear in mind that the magnetism of his wit and his wine has not extended to me."

"If you want to imply, Miss Courtenay, that I was not in a condition to judge of——"

"Mr. M'Kinlay, I say nothing at any time by implication. People are prone to call me too outspoken. What I say and what I mean to say is this, that I cannot imagine a person of your intelligence calmly listening to and concurring in such a project."

"I am free to own I disliked it, and I distrusted it; the few words that your brother's butler, Rickards, said about this girl's craft and subtlety, the artful way she got round people, the study she made of the tempers and tastes of those about her——"

"And with all this before you, with this knowledge fresh as it was in your mind, you quietly sit down to agree to a plan which opens to these very qualities a most dangerous field of exercise. What do you mean by it? What do you intend? I can't suppose," said she, with a sneer, "you contemplated her being Lady Wardle?"

"I certainly did not," said he, with a sickly smile.

"Well, sir, you have placed yourself in a position for malevolent people to impute worse to you. Will you just tell me, who ever heard of such a thing? Is there any country, any society ever tolerated it? This girl is close on sixteen."

"He asked particularly about her age," said M'Kinlay, who was now so confused that he knew not well what he said.

And, simple as the words were, they seemed to pierce to her very heart, for she sprang to her feet, and in a voice trembling with passion, said,—

"I sincerely trust that you manage the material questions confided to you with more ability and tact than you do matters of social interest, and I can only say, sir, it is the last occasion of this kind on which you will be troubled with any commission from me."

"I believed I was strictly carrying out your intentions. You said she must not come abroad."

"But I never said——" she stopped, and the crimson flush rose on her face and covered her whole forehead. "Now mind me, Mr. M'Kinlay, and remember, I do not intend that you should twice mistake my meaning; my wish was, and is, that this girl should go back to the place, the people, and the condition from which my brother, in a very ill-judging hour, took her. I believed, and I believe, that her presence in any, the most remote, connection with our family, is fraught with inconvenience, or worse—do you understand me so far?"

"I do," said he, slowly.

"Well, with this strong conviction on my mind, I desire that she should be sent home again; and I tell Mr. M'Kinlay now, that any favour he cares for or values at my hands depends on the success with which he carries out this wish."

"But how is this possible? What can I do?"

"That is for your consideration, sir; you entangled the skein, you must try if you cannot undo it. Lawyers, I have always heard, have resources at their command common mortals never have dreamed of. You may discover that Sir Within has no right to exercise this guardianship. You might find out," she smiled dubiously as she uttered the words, "that the girl's friends disapproved of this protection,—very humble people occasionally are right-minded on these points,—you might find—how can I tell what your ingenuity could not find—excellent reasons that she should go back to Ireland and to the obscurity she should never have quitted. I don't doubt it may be hard to do this; but until I learn that it is impossible, I will never consent to withdraw from Mr. M'Kinlay that confidence with which his character and his abilities have ever inspired me."

"If the desire to win your favour, Miss Courtenay——"

"No, no, Mr. M'Kinlay, that is not enough! We women are very practical, if we are not very logical; we ask for success from those who aspire to our good esteem."

"To meet a difficulty, the first thing is to see where is the hitch!" said he, thoughtfully.

"I don't believe that I apprehend you here. What is it that you mean?"

"I mean, Miss Courtenay, that it is only by learning very accurately what are the reasons for this girl's removal—what urgent necessity, in fact, requires it—that I shall be likely to hit upon the means to effect it."

"Suppose it to be a caprice—a mere caprice!"

"In that case I should be powerless."

"I don't mean an actual caprice," said she, hurriedly, for she saw her error; "but a sort of apprehension that this initial mistake of my brother's would lead to worse. Great unhappiness has been caused to families by these connections; the Irish are a very vindictive people, sir; if they thought, as they might think, some years hence, that we should have discovered our blunder before——In short, sir, I will not turn special pleader to show what I wish and I insist on."

"Do you think if I were to remain here to-morrow, Sir Gervais would be able to see me?"

"It is most improbable; I am certain the doctors would not consent to it."

"Nor even the next day, perhaps?"

"Just as unlikely; everything like business is strictly forbidden to him."

"Then I do not see why I should not start at once—now!"

"If I am to accept this as zeal to serve me," said she, in a very sweet accent, "I thank you sincerely."

"Ah, Miss Courtenay, could you only guess with what ardour I would apply myself to win your favour! If you had known how the very faintest promise of that favour——"

"Mr. M'Kinlay," said she, stopping him, and bestowing a very captivating smile on him, "Mr. M'Kinlay belongs to a profession that never stipulates for its reward!"

"Enough, my dear Miss Courtenay," said he, and in his enthusiasm, he actually seized her hand and kissed it.

"Good-bye," said she, with a sort of maidenly impatience; "let me hear from you soon." And she left him.

That same night saw Mr. M'Kinlay wearily rumbling along the same way he had lately travelled, very tired and very road-sick; but still there burned in his heart a small flame of hope, a tiny light, indeed, not unlike one of the little lamps which from time to time he saw on the wayside, throwing their sickly glare over some humble shrine.

Ah, M'Kinlay! if you could but have seen the hurried impatience with which a cambric handkerchief was employed to efface, as it were, all trace of that rapturous embrace, it might have rescued you from some vain fancies, even though it made the road all the wearier and drearier.

A very few words more will complete our account of a retrospect that has already grown longer than we wished. Mr. M'Kinlay's first care on reaching town was to address a very carefully-worded and respectful letter to Sir Within Wardle, stating that as the Vyner family had not fully approved of what he, M'K., had done with regard to the arrangements for Miss O'Hara, he hoped Sir Within would graciously name an early day to receive him, and explain what were the plans which they had fixed on for this young person, and by what means they purposed to relieve him from a charge which could not be other than embarrassing.

The following was the reply he received by return of post:—

"Dear Sir,—Sir Within Wardle has handed me your note, and directed me to answer it. Perhaps this fact alone, and of itself, will be a sufficient reply. It will at least serve to show that, while I am honoured by his entire confidence, I am not the cause of any such embarrassment as you feelingly deplore.

"Sir Within sees nothing in his present arrangements which call for the advice you are so kind as to offer, nor does he feel warranted in giving you the inconvenience of a journey, whose results would be unprofitable. Apart from this discussion, a visit from you would be always acceptable.

"Believe me, dear sir, with every sense of esteem and respect, yours,

"Kate O'Hara."

This short epistle, written in a bold but well-formed handwriting, and sealed with the initials of the writer, M'Kinlay forwarded by the night-mail to Miss Courtenay, and in due course received the following three lines:—

"Dear Sir,—It will not be necessary in future to impose any further trouble on you in this matter. Sir Within Wardle, the young lady, and yourself, are all admirable representatives of the orders you severally pertain to.

"And I am, your faithful, servant,

"Georgina Courtenay."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SIR WITHIN AND HIS WARD.

How time has slipped over since we were last here, in the midst of the Welsh mountains! It is more than a year, but still wonderfully little has gone on in that interval. The larch-trees at Dalradern have added some palms to their stature, but the venerable oaks and elms disdain to show by change the influence of so brief a period, and, in the same way, it is in Kate alone—that plant of rapid growth—that we have much alteration to mark.

What a change has been wrought in her! It is not merely that she has grown into a tall and graceful girl, but that one by one the little traits of her peasant origin have faded away, and she looks, and seems, and carries herself with all the air of a high-born beauty. In her lofty brow, her calm features, her manner, in which a quiet dignity blends with a girlish grace, and, above all, in her voice, singularly sweet-toned as it was, might be read every sign of that station men distinctively call the "best."

Masters and professors of every kind had surrounded her, but she had a sort of indolent activity in her disposition, which tended little to the work of learning, while her quickness enabled her to pick up smatterings of many things. But, as she said herself, Sir Within was her best teacher. The old minister's tact, his social readiness, his instinctive seizure of the nice points of every situation,—these were the gifts that had a special attraction for her; and while she was envying him the charm of a manner that could captivate all, from the highest to the humblest, she had actually acquired the gift and made it her own.

To recognize in her the traits on which he most prided himself, to see in that lovely girl his pupil in the arts of society, to mark in her a copyist of himself in the little tricks of manner and effect, was the greatest of all flatteries; and he never wearied of watching her repeating himself before him in a form so captivating and so graceful.

Although he had lost—and it was a loss he deplored—the friendly intercourse of the Vyners, and although the neighbourhood more strictly than ever quarantined him now, no representations nor remonstrances could prevail upon him to send Kate to a school, or to place her under other protection than his own. Innumerable were the governesses who had come down to take charge of her; none, however, remained long. Some alleged it was the solitude that oppressed them; others averred that their pupil would submit to no discipline but such as she liked, and that not alone the studies she would pursue, but even the hours she would devote to them, should be at her own choosing.

And one or two took higher ground, and declared that the establishment which contained an old bachelor and a very beautiful ward, was not in a position to confront the criticisms of the world.

To such as have not known, or met with the class Sir Within pertained to, it will perhaps seemed incredible that the old rake actually felt flattered by this attack on his reputation. All that he had ever known of life was passed amongst people of admirable manners and very lax morals. They were the best bred, the best informed, the best dressed, and the pleasantest in the universe. Nowhere was life so easy and agreeable as in their company; every one was kind, considerate, and obliging; not a hard word was ever dropped. Who could be uncharitable where all was tolerated? Who could be severe where everything was pardoned?

It was by a very easy induction that he was led to believe that a certain laxity on the score of morals was an essential element of good breeding, and that nothing was so low in tone as that "eternal scrutiny," as he called it, into one's neighbours' habits, which would make of a gentleman very little other than a detective.

When he heard, therefore, that a certain Mademoiselle La Grange had taken her departure on these exceptional grounds, he actually chuckled with delighted vanity.

"So, *ma mie*"—this was his pet name for Kate—"they tell me that mademoiselle has gone off this morning," said he, "no longer able to tolerate a house where there is no mistress."

"The note she left behind her went fully into the matter," said Kate. "It was not alone that you were unmarried, but that you were a very well-known monster of vice."

"Vrai! vrai!" cried he, with ecstacy; "monstre épouvantable!"

"And, to confirm it, she added that no one came here; that the neighbours avoided the house, as the abode of a plague; and even sight-seers would not gratify the craving of their curiosity at the cost of their propriety."

"Did she say all that?"

"Yes; she said it very neatly, too; as prettily and as tersely as such impertinence can be put in nice French."

"And this is the ninth departure, is it not, *ma mie*, on these high grounds of morality?"

"No, sir; only the fifth. Two alleged loneliness, one accused the damp, and one protested against *my* temper!"

"What had you done, then?"

"Everything that was cross and ill-natured. It was the unlucky week that Cid Hamet staked himself."

"I remember; there were two days you would not come down to dinner on pretence of headache, and you told me afterwards it was all ill-humour."

"Because I always tell you everything," said she, with a smile so captivatingly beautiful, that it lit up her face as the sun lights up a landscape.

"I am sorry, too," said he, after a short silence, "that mademoiselle should have gone away at this moment, for I am expecting visitors."

"Visitors, sir?"

"Yes, child; two distant, very distant relatives of mine are coming to-day; less, indeed, to see me than the place I live in. They are my heirs, *ma mie;* and the world says, no sort of people are less palatable to the man in possession, and, I take it, the world is right in the matter. When one thinks how he dislikes the man who keeps the newspaper too long at the club, it may be imagined how he is hated who keeps another out of an estate; and the sense of being so hated engenders something that is not friendship!"

"I think I can understand that feeling!" said she, thoughtfully.

"Every one knows," continued he, "that when he is gone, the objects which he has loved and cherished—I mean the material objects, for I am talking as an old bachelor—will survive to give pleasure to others; but somehow he fancies—at least, *I* fancy—that the new incumbent will not know the full luxury of the shade under that sycamore where we sat yesterday to watch the fish in the pond; that he'll never appreciate that Claude as I do, when I let a fresh blaze of sunlight on the opposite wall, and see it in a soft reflected light; and as to the delight of riding through these old wooded alleys as I feel it, he'll not have *you* for a companion—eh, *ma belle et bonne?*"

She turned away her head. Was it shame, or sorrow, or both? Who knows? "What are your friends like?" asked she, suddenly.

"They are very like each other, and not like anything or any one else I ever met. They are, first of all, descendants of an old Huguenot family of excellent blood. Their ancestors settled here, and, like most others, they prospered. One became a peer, but died without an heir, and the title became extinct. The present head of the house is this person I expect here today, with his son. He is a banker, as his son is. They are very rich, and very eager to be richer. Report says that they are not very generous or free-handed. My own experience can neither refute nor confirm the rumour. Their London house was very handsome when I saw it, and when I dined there everything bespoke the habits of wealth; but they had a sort of air of business in their reception, a look of doing something that was to redound to the bank, that I didn't like. The company, too, was of that mixed character that showed they were less familiars than clients."

"How intensely acute to detect all this at once!"

"I am nothing, *ma mie*, positively nothing, if I am not *fin*. It is the spirit of my old calling that survives in me. Nay, I even thought, in the distributions of the host's attentions to his friends, I could name the men who stood with a goodly balance to their account, and point out those who were being, what is called, accommodated."

"Oh, this is too much!" said she, laughing; but there was nothing in her tone or look that implied a shade of incredulity.

"Well, you are to see them both to-day; they will be here to dinner." He said this with a half-suppressed sigh, for the visit promised him very little that was agreeable.

He was essentially a man of conventionalities, and there were some difficulties in the present case that embarrassed him. First, he should be unable to have any dinner company to meet his visitors. He had long ceased to have intercourse with his country neighbours, and, of course, none would think of "calling" on his friends. This was provoking enough, but a greater trouble remained behind it. Kate's presence! How was he to account for that? Who was she? Why was she there? Who, and what, and where were her friends? Would not the Ladarelles at once connect the estrangement in which he lived from all society with the fact of this girl being beneath his roof? Would they not at once jump to the conclusion, It is this scandal has deterred all from visiting him? Now, it is just possible that something in this allegation against his morality might have tickled the morbid vanity of the old rake, who loved to think that youth and vice were convertible terms, and he even smirked as he imagined himself called on for his defence. Still, in his element of gentleman, there survived the shame of the part that would be assigned to Kate by such an imputation, and it is but justice to him to say that he felt this acutely. Had there been time for such an arrangement, he would have procured a governess, and sent her away to some sea-side spot. As it was, he thought of taking the Vyners' cottage, and placing her there under the charge of Mrs. Simcox. This would have been easy, as the cottage had been advertised to let for some time back; but, as ill luck would have it, some one had just arrived there, whether as friend or tenant none knew.

It was true, he might keep her unseen for the few days the visit would last. The Castle was ample enough to secure a retreat which should be inviolable; but there were difficulties, too, about this, not easily to be met.

He could not implicitly rely on the discretion of servants, especially of servants who found themselves in the presence of the coming heir, of him who should be "king hereafter;" and again, he was not quite sure how she herself would meet a proposition that assigned her to so equivocal a position. She was very proud, and on one or two occasions he had seen her display a spirit that no old gentleman of his stamp would possibly expose himself to from a young girl, if he could help it. There was, then, nothing left but to present her as his ward, a word so wide in acceptance, that he trusted it might defy scrutiny, and with this resolve, though not without misgivings, he went about giving his orders, and directing the arrangements to receive his guests.

Even this office had its shade of sadness, pleasant as it is at ordinary times to prepare for those who come to enliven solitude or break a monotony, which even of itself savours of gloom; the task is not so agreeable if undertaken for those who come to inspect what will be their own hereafter; what, even as they survey, they seem half inclined to grasp; what, while they look at, they speculate on the changes they will effect in, thinking of that day when he, who now does the honours, shall have left the stage, and they themselves become the actors.

Kate, however, accompanied him everywhere, aiding by her counsels, and assisting by her suggestions, and serving in this way to dispel much of that depression which the task imposed. It was as they both were returning from one of the gardens, that a keeper came forward with a dead pheasant in his hand.

"A hen! Michael, a hen!" cried Sir Within, with displeasure.

"Yes, sir, and a very fine one. It was the gentleman who has just come to Dinasllyn shot her this morning. I met him coming up here to excuse himself to you, and say how sorry he was. He gave me this card and hoped you'd not be displeased at it."

"What's the name? I've not got my glass, Kate."

"Mr. George Grenfell, sir, Dover Street."

"Grenfell, Grenfell—never heard of any Grenfells, but Cox and Grenfell, the Piccadilly people, eh?"

Kate gave no answer, but still held the card, with her eyes fixed upon it.

"Sad thing to shoot a hen—very sad thing—and a remarkably fine bird; quite young, quite young," muttered Sir Within to himself. "Could hardly be the game sauce Grenfell, I think, eh, Kate? This apology smacks of the gentleman. What was he like, Michael?"

"A fine-looking man, sir, standing as tall as me; and about thirty-six or thirty-eight, perhaps. He had a nice spaniel with him, sir, one of the Woburn breed; I know 'em well."

"I'm sorry he shot that hen. Ain't you, Kate?"

But Kate was deep in thought, and did not hear him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SIR WITHIN'S GUESTS.

A SHORT, somewhat plump, dark-eyed young man, with a low but wide forehead, and a well-formed but rather thick-lipped mouth, lay in his dressing-gown on the sofa smoking, and at intervals conversing with a smart-looking valet. These were Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, and his man Fisk. The time—a little past midnight; the place—a bedroom in Dalradern Castle.

"The governor gone to bed yet, Fisk?"

"No, sir; he's still talking with the old gent. They seemed to have had high words of it awhile ago, but they've got quiet again."

"The governor came down expressly for that! He likes a bit of a breeze, too, and I believe it does him good."

"Well, indeed, I think you're right, sir; I never seed him in such health as after that trial where Mr. Hythe, the cashier, was sentenced to fourteen years. It was just like putting so much to the master's own life."

Whether the prospect of such longevity was so agreeable to the young gentleman I cannot say, but he winced a little under the remark, and said, half moodily; "This old cove here ought to be thinking of that same journey. It's slow work waiting for the death of a man, after he passes seventy-four or five. The assurance offices know that much."

"It's to be all yours, Master Dolly, ain't it?" asked the man, in a coaxing sort of tone.

"Every stone of it, and every stick that the old boy doesn't manage to cut down in the meanwhile."

"You'll never live here, Master Dolly? You'd not stand this lonesome place a week!"

"I don't think I should, Tom. I might come down for the shooting, and bring some fellows with me, or I might run down for a few weeks 'on the sly.' By the way, have you found out who she is?"

"No, sir; they're as close as wax. Mrs. Simcox, I see, knows all about it, but she won't say a word beyond the 'young lady as is my master's ward.'"

"Is she French or English?"

"Can't say, sir; but I suspect she's French."

"Is she his daughter?"

"At times I do think she is; but she ain't like him, sir, not a bit!"

"But why can't you find out where she came from when she came here, who and what her friends, if she has any?"

"It's clear impossible, sir. They has all got orders to know nothing, and it's nothing they know."

"Did you try them with a 'tip,' Tom?"

"No use, sir. In a town house you can always do that, but these savages—they are just savages—in the country think they are bound to their masters, body and soul."

"What a mistake, Tom," said the other, with a twinkle of the eye.

"Well, sir, it's a mistake when a man does not love his master;" and Mr. Fisk turned away and drew his hand across his eyes.

The grin upon young Mr. Ladarelle's face was not a very flattering commentary on this show of feeling, but he did not speak for some minutes. At last he said, "He presented her to my governor as Mademoiselle O'Hara, saying, 'My ward;' and she received us as calmly as if she owned the place. That's what puzzles me, Tom—her cool self-possession."

"It ain't nat'ral, sir; it ain't, indeed!"

"It's the sort of manner a man's wife might have, and not even that if she were very young. It was as good as a play to see how she treated the governor, as if he had never been here before, and that everything was new to him!"

Mr. Fisk rubbed his hands and laughed heartily at this joke.

"And as for myself, she scarcely condescended to acknowledge me."

"Warn't that too imperent, sir?"

"It was not gracious, at all events, but we'll know more of each other before the week is over. You'll see."

"That's pretty sartin, sir."

"Not but I'd rather you could have found out something like a clue to her first of all."

"Well, indeed, sir, there wasn't no way of doin' it. I even went down to the stable-yard and saw her own boxes. She has two as neat nags as ever you'd see in the Park, and I tried it on with her groom—Bill Richey they call him—and there was nothing to be done, sir. He had just one answer for everything; and when I said, 'Can she ride?' 'Ride! why wouldn't she?' 'Has she these two for her own use?' says I. 'Why wouldn't she?' says the fellow again. 'So I suppose,' says I, 'she's got lots of tin?' 'Why wouldn't she have lots of it?' said he, in the same voice. I don't know whether he was more rogue or fool, sir, but it was no good saying any more to him."

Young Ladarelle arose, and with his hands thrust low in his pockets, and his head slightly bent forward, walked the room in deep thought. "Cool as he is, he'd scarcely have presented her to the governor if there was a screw loose," muttered he; "he's too much a man of the world for that. And yet, what can it be?"

"There must be something in it, that's certain, sir; for none of the neighbours visit here, and Sir Within don't go out anywhere."

"How did you learn that?"

"From the gardener, sir. He was saying what a cruel shame it was to see the fruit rotting under the trees; and that last September he gave a basketful of pine-apples to the pigs, for that none of the people round would take presents when Sir Within sent them. 'That's all on account of her,' says I, with a wink, for I thought I had him landed. 'I don't well know,' says he, 'what it's on account of, but here's the master comin' up, and maybe he'll tell you!' And I had just time to cut away before he seen me."

"All that we know, then, is that there's a mystery in it. Well," muttered he, "I couldn't ask a prettier skein to unravel. She is very beautiful! Are they late or early here, Tom?" asked he, after a pause.

"They be just as they please, sir. The housekeeper told me there's breakfast from ten to one every morning, and dinner is served for six people every day, though only them two selves sits down to it; but the old gent says, *per*haps some one might drop in. He says that every day of the year, sir; but they never drop in. Maybe he knows why!"

"Call me at eleven or twelve—I don't care if it be one; for the day will be long enough here, after that."

"They tell me it's a very pretty place, sir, and plenty to see."

"I know every inch of it. I used to be here after my Rugby half, and I don't want to recall those days, I promise you."

"They've got some nice saddle-horses, too, sir."

"So they may; and they may ride them, too."

"And the lake is alive with carp, I hear."

"I'll not diminish their number; I'll promise them so much.

I must stay here as long as the governor does, which fortunately for me, cannot be many days; but tobacco and patience will see me through it."

"I always said it, sir: 'When Master Dolly comes to his fortune, it's not an old gaol he'll sit down to pass his life in!' "

"It's one of the finest and oldest places in the kingdom," said the young man, angrily, "though perhaps a London cad might prefer Charing Cross to it."

"No other orders, sir?" said Mr. Fisk, curtly.

"No; you may go. Call me at nine—d'ye hear—at nine; and I'll breakfast at ten." And now was Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle alone with his own thoughts.

Though he had rebuked so promptly and so sharply the flippant impertinence of his servant, the young gentleman was by no means persuaded that a sojourn at Dalradern was likely to prove lively or agreeable. He thought Sir Within a bore, and he felt—very unmistakably felt—that the old baronet regarded himself as a snob. The very way in which the old diplomatist seasoned his talk for his guests, the mode in which he brought all things to the meridian of Piccadilly, showed clearly the estimation in which he held them; and though the elder Ladarelle, whose head carried weightier cares, had no room for such thoughts, the young man brooded over and disliked them.

"By what reprisals should he resent this covert impertinence?" was the question that very often recurred to him. Should he affect to undervalue the place, and all the art treasures? Should he throw out dark hints of how much these tasteful toys might realize at a sale? Should he speculate vaguely on what the Castle would become, if, instead of a show-house, it were to be made what he would call habitable? Or, last of all, what tone should he assume towards mademoiselle—should he slight her, or make love to her? In these self-discussions he fell asleep at last.

Long before any of his guests were awake the next morning, Sir Within had called for his writing-desk. It was a passion of his to ask for his writing materials before he was up. It smacked of old times, when, remembering something that might very well have been forgotten, he would dash off a few smart lines to a minister or a secretary, "with reference to the brief conversation with which your Excellency honoured me yesterday." He was an adept in little notes; he knew how to throw off those small evasive terms which pass for epigrams, and give a sort of glitter to a style that was about as real as a theatrical costume.

He had suddenly bethought him of a case for the exercise of his high gift. It was to address a few neat lines to his recently-arrived neighbour at the Cottage, and ask him that day to dinner. To convert that gentleman's polite attention in sending up to the Castle the pheasant he had shot by mistake, into an excuse for the liberty of inviting him without a previous exchange of visits, constituted exactly the amount of difficulty he could surmount. It was a low wall, and he could leap it splendidly. It must be owned that he succeeded. His note was courteous without familiarity. It was a faint foreshadowing of the pleasure the writer had promised himself in the acquaintance of one so thoroughly imbued with the nicest notions of good breeding.

"I hope," he wrote in conclusion, "you will not, by refusing me this honour, rebuke the liberty by which I have presumed to aspire to it;" and with this he signed himself, with every sense of his most distinguished consideration, "Within Wildrington Wardle."

The reply was prompt—a most cordial acceptance. Sir Within scanned the terms of the note, the handwriting, the paper, the signature, and the seal. He was satisfied with everything. The writer was unquestionably a man of the world, and, in the old envoy's estimation, that meant all, or nearly all, that one could desire in friend or acquaintance; one, in short, who knew how to subordinate passions, feelings, emotions, all selfishness, and all personal objects to the laws of a well-regulated conventionality; and who neither did, nor attempted to do, anything but what society had done already, and declared might be done again.

How far Mr. George Grenfell realized this high estimate, it is not our purpose to inquire; we turn rather to what we are far more sure of, the delight with which he read Sir Within's invitation.

Grenfell was well known about town to members of two or three good clubs, where he had a certain amount of influence with very young men. He was an excellent whist-player, and very useful on a wine committee; an admirable judge of a horse, though not remarkable as a rider. He knew everybody, but somehow, he went nowhere. There were people—very good people, too, as the world calls them—would gladly have had his society at their tables in town, or in their houses at Christmas; but Grenfell saw that, if once launched amongst these, he must abandon all ambition of everything higher: extrication would be impossible; and so, with a self-denial which only a high purpose ever inspires, he refused invitations here, and rejected advances there, waiting on for the time when the great world would awaken to the conviction of his merits, and say, This is the very man we wanted!

Now, the great world was not so prompt in making this discovery as it might have been, and Mr. Grenfell was getting on in years, and not fully as hopeful as when his hair had been thicker and his beard bushier. He had begun, not exactly to sulk, but what the French call to *bouder*,—a sort of male pouting—and he thought of going abroad, or going into Parliament, or doing something or other which would give him a new start in life; and it was to ruminate over these plans he had written to his friend Vyner, to say, "Let me, or lend me—I don't care which—your Welsh Cottage, for a month or two;" and by return of post came the answer, saying, "It is yours as long as you like it;" and thus was he there.

Sir Within's note pleased him much. The old envoy was, it is true, a bygone, and a thing of the past; still he was one of those Brahmins whose priesthood always is accredited, and Grenfell knew that to walk into the Travellers' arm in arm with him, would be a great step in advance; for there was no set or knot of men so unapproachable by the outsiders, as that small clique of religionists who scourge themselves with red tape, and worship the great god "F. O.!"

"In asking for the Cottage," Grenfell had said, "I should like to have an introduction of some sort to your quondam neighbour, Wardle, who, though too profligate for his neighbours, will not, I apprehend, endanger my morals. Let me have, therefore, a few lines to accredit me, as one likely to suit his humour." To this Vyner replied, not very clearly: "The intimacy they had used to have with Sir Within had ceased; they held no correspondence now. It was a long story, and would not be worth the telling, nor very intelligible, perhaps, when told; but it was enough to say, that even should they meet now personally, it was by no means sure if they would recognize or address each other. You will use this knowledge for your guidance in case you ever come to know him, and which I hope you may, for he is a very delightful acquaintance, and full of those attentions which render a neighbourhood pleasant. I do not say so that you may repeat it; but simply as an admission of what is due—that I deeply regret our estrangement, though I am not certain that it was avoidable." This, which Grenfell deemed somewhat contradictory, served, at all events, to show that he could not make Sir Within's acquaintance through this channel, and he was overjoyed when another and a more direct opening presented itself.

"The hen pheasant I thought would do it," muttered Grenfell, as he read the note. "A punster would say, I had shot up into his acquaintance."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A WALK BEFORE DINNER.

Poor Sir Within! What a change is all this for you! Instead of that pleasant little pottering about from terrace to garden, and from garden to gallery; now in ecstacy over some grand effect of light on a favourite picture, some rich promise of beauty in an opening flower, or, better than either, a chance peep at the fair "ward" as she flitted past, a vision of beauty she well knew how to exaggerate by infrequency—for it was her especial habit to be rarely, if ever, seen of a morning—now, he had to devote himself to his guest, the elder Ladarelle, and not even in the office of cicerone or guide over the grounds and the woods, but as the apologist of this, and the explainer of that. It had been settled by law that a certain sum should be expended each year on the demesne at the wise discretion of the life tenant, and now came the moment in which this same wisdom was to be arraigned, and all its tasteful exercise brought to the cold and terrible test of what is called permanency. The rock-work grottoes, the temples, the rustic bridges, and cane pagodas—all that Horace Walpoleism, in fact, by which the area of domesticity can be so enlarged as to embrace the field, the garden, and the shrubbery—all this, with its varied luxury, and elegance, and beauty, and bad taste, was so repugnant to the mind of the old banker, that he regarded the whole as a tawdry and tasteless extravagance. Structures in stone and iron he could understand. He wanted permanency; and though the old envoy, with a little faint jest, begged to insinuate that he asked more than was supposed to be accorded by the laws of nature, the stern intelligence of the other rejected the pleasantry, and vaguely hinted at a "bill in equity."

"None of these, sir, not one of them would be 'allowed,'" was the phrase he repeated again and again. "The discretionary power vested in *you* to-day, or in *me*, as it might be to-morrow——"

"I ask pardon," broke in the minister; "it is not my present intention to impose the burden upon you so soon. I hope still to live a little longer, with the kind permission of my friends and successors."

"Humph!" muttered the other and turned away his head.

"There was an arrangement, however, which I submitted to you four years ago. I am ready—not very willingly, perhaps but still ready—to return to it."

"You mean, to commute the life-interest into a sum for immediate surrender of the estate? I remember, we did discuss it formerly. Your demand was, I think, sixty thousand pounds—equal to very close on six years' income."

"Yes; that was the sum fixed on."

"Well, suppose we were to entertain the question now. What proposal are you prepared to make, Sir Within?"

"I am ready to repeat my former offer, sir."

"Made four years and five months ago?"

"Precisely," said Sir Within, colouring deeply.

"Four years and a half, Sir Within, at your age or at mine, are a very considerable space of time."

"I do not deny it, sir; but I feel in the enjoyment of excellent health. I rise at the same hour, and eat my meals as heartily as I did then; with every regret for the inconvenience I'm occasioning, I still profess to believe that my chances of life are pretty much as they were."

"Actuaries are the only people to entertain these points. Indeed, friends should not discuss them."

"Our friendship has stood the test of very delicate details so beautifully this morning, that I see no reason why we should not take all the benefit we can get out of it."

The fine sarcasm with which he spoke was thoroughly understood, though unnoticed, by the other, who went on—

"When I mentioned actuaries, I merely meant to say that demands of this kind are not arbitrary or capricious—that they are based on laws established by long and abstruse calculations."

"Perhaps it is my fancy to imagine myself an exceptional case," said Sir Within, with a faint smile.

"They would take little count of this. They would say, 'Here is a man aged——'" he paused for the other to fill up the blank.

"Let us say one hundred," said Sir Within, bowing.

"Who has lived long in warm climates——"

"Participating freely in the dissipations of his class and order," said Sir Within, throwing back his head, and looking as though, with all the daring of this avowal, he defied scrutiny.

"They'd not say forty thousand. I have my doubts if they'd give you five-and-thirty," said the banker, curtly.

"And under these circumstances, I should consider it my duty to break off the negotiation, and retire from the conference."

"Let us suppose, for talk sake, the arrangement possible. I conclude you would not insist upon that other matter—the settlement clause, I mean. You remember that Sir Hugh Rivers decided it was not to be maintained in law?"

"The Attorney-General, with due submission, sir, never saw the original document; he saw the draft, which was subsequently cancelled, and if there be any point upon which I will waive nothing—positively nothing—it is this."

"When a man insists so positively on his right to make a settlement, it is no unfair presumption to infer that he means to marry."

"The supposition might certainly be entertained," said the old envoy, bowing with the courtesy he would have observed in a ministerial conference.

"For *that*"—and the banker laid a most marked and peculiar emphasis on the word—"for that, most assuredly, I was not prepared."

"Nor can I say," continued the other, "that I deemed it any part of my duty to submit such a possibility to your consideration."

"Perhaps not, Sir Within; there was no absolute reason why you should. You are, of course, the only judge of what concerns your own interests, or—or——"

"Or happiness?"

"I didn't say happiness, simply because I thought it was the very consideration that you were about to omit."

Sir Within smiled very blandly; he arranged the frill of his shirt—he wore a frilled shirt—and, taking forth a splendidly jewelled box, he offered a pinch to his companion. It was the diplomatic mode of saying that a conference was closed; but Mr. Ladarelle did not understand this nicety.

"After all, Sir Within, neither you nor I are men who can affect to defy the world. What the world thinks and says of us, we cannot undervalue."

"The world, at *my* age, is the six, perhaps eight, people I could get to dine with me."

"No, no, sir, don't say that—you can't say that. The world is to you, as to all men who have taken a large part in public affairs, the wide circle of those who bring to their judgment on their fellow men a vast acquaintance with motives, and interests, and reasons; and, besides all these, with conventionalities and decorums. They form the jury who decide on, not alone the good morals of their contemporaries, but on their good taste."

"Perhaps it might be my fortune to offer them a most undeniable proof of mine," said the old man, intentionally mistaking what the other had said.

"Take care, Sir Within! Take care. You might be like that case at Guildford t'other day, where the judge said, 'There is nothing so serious in the indictment against you as your own defence.'"

"I believe you said you never took snuff," said the envoy, tapping the gorgeous box he still held in his fingers. "That clump of oaks you see yonder," continued he, pointing with his finger, "shuts out one of the most beautiful bits of landscape I ever saw, and I have only waited for your presence here, to decide on cutting them down."

"I will not consent to fell timber, sir, for the sake of landscape. I am certain Adolphus would agree with me."

They now walked on, side by side, in silence. How beautiful that wood alley was! How calmly sweet the leafy shade, how deliciously the blackbird carolled from its depths, and how soft the smooth turf beneath their feet, and yet how little they heeded or cared for it all! The banker spoke first: "If you had been prepared to propose terms on which it was possible to treat, Sir Within, my son, I know—as for myself, the plan has no attractions for me—but my son, I know, would have felt disposed to meet you; but when you start on the basis that an interval of five years, or something akin to it, makes no inroad whatever on a man's life, and then, possibly aided by that theory, hint at the likelihood of having to charge the estate with settlement——"

"My dear Mr. Ladarelle, forgive my interrupting you. All this is very painful, and what is worse, unprofitable. I remember a remark of the charming old Duke of Anhalt to his neighbouring sovereign, the Prince of Hohen Alttingen: 'My dear Prince,' said he, 'whatever our ministers can and ought to discuss together, will always prove a most unseemly topic for us;' so be assured, sir, that what our lawyers can wrangle over, we will do much better if we leave to them."

"You know best, I am certain, sir. I feel it is your province to understand these cases; but I own it would never have occurred to me to take a stupid old German potentate as an authority on a matter of business. May I ask what is that edifice yonder, like a piece of confectionery?"

"It is my aviary, which I shall be proud to show you."

"Excuse me, I know nothing about birds."

"I shall not insist, for it is the season when they lose their plumage."

"By Jove! sir, if this system of expense be carried on, I suspect that some of ourselves will be just as devoid of feathers. That gimcrack cost, I should say, seven or eight hundred pounds?"

"You have guessed too low! It will, when finished—for the frescoes are not completed—amount to very close on two thousand."

"For linnets and piping bullfinches!"

"Pardon me, sir; for nothing of the kind. For the blue sparrows of Java, for the crimson owl of Ceylon, for the azure-winged mocking-bird, and the scarlet bustard."

"Let us see what the master will say to this fine catalogue, when it is presented to him as part of works of permanent value—that's the phrase, sir, permanent and substantial improvements—which scarcely contemplated cockatoos and canaries. And what do I see yonder? Is that the Lord Mayor's state barge, that you have bought in at second hand?"

"This is a little gondola—a caprice of my ward's, sir, and not to be questioned in any way."

It was the first time since they met that any allusion to Kate had been dropped between them, and already the old envoy's voice showed by its vibration that the theme was one not to be lightly adverted to.

"The young lady's tastes, it would seem, incline to splendour; but possibly her fortune warrants it."

"I am certain that her tastes befit her condition," said the other, with a tone of open defiance.

"I have no doubt of it, not the least doubt of it; I would only observe, that a person so very attractive——"

"Well, sir, go on; finish what you were about to say."

"Certainly not, Sir Within, when the expression with which you hear me declares that I am taking too great a liberty."

"It is too late for apology, sir. You have already transgressed."

"I never intended an apology, Sir Within, for I took care not to incur what might require one. When I saw, or fancied I saw, that my remarks, well meant as they were, might not be as acceptable as I desired, I forbore from completing them; that is all."

"And you did well, sir!" said the other haughtily, while with a proud wave of his hand, he seemed to say the subject must be dropped.

"I mean to return to town to-morrow," said Mr. Ladarelle, after a pause; "but my son, with your kind permission, will be a burden on your hospitality for a few days longer."

"I am proud to have his company," said the old minister, with a courteous bow; but the other, not noticing it, went on: "He wants to see that mill. Hoare says, that without some arrangement about the supply of water, he must insist upon an abatement; that your Neptunes, and Dryads, and river-gods consume far more than goes over his wheel; and though, perhaps, it's a little premature on our part to enter upon this matter, yet, as the man has a lease renewable at his pleasure——"

"With your gracious leave, it is on a question of wine, and not of water, I will ask your opinion. I have got some very old Steinberger, which I propose to have your judgment on, and as I hear the first bell ringing, probably we have not much time to lose. This is the shortest way back to the house."

The banker made no reply; he plodded on moodily towards the Castle, and mounted the stairs to his dressing-room, neither pleased with his host nor himself, nor, indeed, with the rest of the world.

It is very probable that Sir Within retired to dress for dinner far more deeply wounded and far more irritated by this interview than his guest. With persons as plain spoken as Mr. Ladarelle, Sir Within had held very little intercourse in life. He had always played the game with those of the most refined and the most susceptible politeness. Men who would no more have committed a rudeness than a murder, and it was no mean trial of his nerves to be told, not merely that he was old, but that he was of that age in which life was something more than precarious. The ex-envoy felt, in fact, as he might have felt had some one ordered his carriage before the time he himself had told his coachman to come; thus intimating, it is possible, from reasons not entered upon or discussed, that he might think proper to leave earlier than he had contemplated. He changed colour so often, that he had to supply a little extra rouge to his cheek; and his nerves were so shaken, that he could not descend to the drawing-room without a little dram of Maraschino and ether.

He found Kate alone in the drawing-room as he entered. She was most becomingly dressed, and wore a sprig of lily-of-the-valley in her hair, which became her vastly.

"How well you look, *ma mie*," said he, as he surveyed her through his glass; "and how glad I should be if our guests were more deserving of us both. *You*, however, cannot help being beautiful."

"And you *will* be witty, whether you like it or not, my dear guardian," said she, with a bewitching smile.

"C'est plus fort que moi! Kate. The old Duc de Nevers said to me, when I was a very young man, 'Mon cher Wardle, always talk your very best, no matter what the theme, or with whom. Never give yourself the indolent habit of careless expression. There is no such thing in conversation as *dishabille*.'"

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, *ma chere*; to be epigrammatic, your faculties must be always in exercise. To let off those brilliant fireworks which astonish the world as wit, the match must be kept ever alight, the hand ready."

"Mr. George Grenfell!" said the servant, throwing wide the door, and after about two seconds' interval, that former acquaintance of our reader entered the room, and was met by Sir Within with a blended polish and cordiality.

"This is a kindness, Mr. Grenfell, that promises well for our future neighbourhood. I am most grateful to you for accepting my short time invitation. My ward, Mademoiselle O'Hara."

He introduced her as he had done to the Ladarelles the day before, as mademoiselle; why, it would not have been so easy to say; perhaps to mystify, perhaps to avoid a difficulty, perhaps to create one; for Sir Within was a diplomatist, and one of these reasons to such a man is own brother of the other.

Grenfell was evidently struck by her beauty; but there was something besides admiration in his gaze; he was surprised and more than surprised; the traits were not altogether new to him, though the expression, lofty—haughty, even—unquestionably was. As for Kate, she had seen too few faces in life to have forgotten any one of them. They were like the books she had read, too remarkable not to be remembered. She knew him, and knew well the very hour and the very spot in which first she saw him.

Either Grenfell had not heard the name O'Hara well, or had not connected it with the past; very possible he had not heard it ever before, for it suggested nothing to him; still her features continued to puzzle him; through all, however, was he enough man of the world to conceal any show of this; and, as he sat down beside the sofa where she sat, opened the usual commonplaces of first acquaintance. He spoke of the country and its charming scenery, especially around Dalradern, which was all new to him; "for I am ashamed," added he, "to own I know more of Switzerland than I do of Wales. Perhaps in this, mademoiselle is a defaulter like myself?"

Here was a question adroitly insinuated, to induce what might lead to some disclosure as to whence she came, or where she had been.

"I am very fond of mountains," said she, as if mistaking his question.

"Ladies are the less selfish in their love of scenery," resumed he, with a little smile, "that they do not connect mountains with grouse shooting. Now, I'm afraid a man, in his admiration for the hill-side and the heather, has some lurking dreams about deer-stalking, and in the highland 'tarn' his thoughts invariably run on ten-pound trout."

"That is the practical side by which men assert their superiority, I believe; but perhaps they mistake occasionally; I suspect they do, at least."

"You mean that women have the quality also?"

"I fancy that women are not so prone to parade this egotism;" said she, with a slight flashing of the eye.

"That may mean something very severe," said he, laughing.

"In which case I could not have said what I intended."

Though this was said apologetically, there was a saucy defiance in her look that declared anything rather than apology.

"Your remark," said he, "reminds me of an Irish squire I heard of, who, wanting to get rid of the charge in his pistol, fired it out of the window into a crowd, saying, 'I hope it won't hurt any of you!' Have you been in Ireland, mademoiselle?"

"I have seen next to nothing of Ireland; far too little to have caught up, as you infer, any traits of her nationality."

There was not the slightest tremor in her voice, nor change in her colour as she spoke, though Grenfell watched her with more—far more—intentness than he was aware of, or would have permitted himself to bestow, if he had known it.

"I know very little of the green island myself," said he. "I once made a yatching excursion with a friend to the west—the same friend to whom I am now indebted for the honour of knowing you."

Kate's cheek grew crimson; she had mistaken the meaning of his words, and fancied that they referred to his meeting her first in Vyner's company, and not to his possession of Vyner's Cottage.

"Will you let me present my friends—Mr. Ladarelle, Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, Mr. Grenfell?" said Sir Within, at this critical moment, "and then, if you will give mademoiselle your arm, we will go to dinner."

It required all the practised tact and consummate skill in such matters of Sir Within's to carry through that day's dinner.

Kate scarcely spoke at all, the elder Ladarelle very little; the younger was evidently bent on finding out who Grenfell was, what were his clubs, his houses, and his associates; and Grenfell, not at all unused to such assaults of curiosity, repelled them by a cold and distant politeness, which gave little aid to table-talk. So that on the old envoy was thrown all the burden of the entertainment.

Where men imagine that in supplying the material wants of humanity they have amply fulfilled the part between host and guest, and that when the viands are good, and the wine exquisite, the whole responsibility is satisfied, it will seem that Sir Within's fears and anxieties were not all reasonable; but this was not, his theory. At a grand dinner, a state occasion, a certain dulness was a part of the solemnity, and full-dress liveries and gold dishes were the natural accompaniments of dreariness and display; but a little dinner meant a choice party, a selected few, bound to bring with them their faculties at the brightest; not sharpening their wits at the moment of exercise, like an unruly orchestra tuning their instruments when they should be playing, but ready to start off at score. What a blank disappointment was here! The few sallies that relieved the dulness came from the younger Ladarelle, and were neither attic in themselves, or quite unquestionable in point of taste; and when they arose to take their coffee, the feeling was rather gratification that so much of weariness had been got over, and a hope that there was not much more to come.

"I shall want you to sing, *ma mie;* I see you won't talk," whispered Sir Within to Kate, as he drew near her.

"No, sir, I have a headache. I shall go and lie down."

"That is about as much of her company as she has vouchsafed us since we have been here," said Ladarelle the younger to Grenfell, us they stood together in a window.

"Is she haughty?"

"I don't know."

"Vain I should take her to be, eh?"

"I don't know."

"Who is she?" whispered Grenfell, in the confidential tone he knew how to assume with younger men.

"I don't know that, either," said Ladarelle. "The old fellow says his ward; but I'd not be surprised if one of these days he should say his wife."

"Why, he's seventy."

"Seventy-six—seventy-six! but he'd like to fancy he was eight-and-thirty."

"A natural sort of self-delusion in its way," said Grenfell, carelessly. "He'd be wrong to marry, though."

"I believe you; and very hard on me, too."

"How do you mean on you!"

"Because the estate comes to me; but he can charge it with a settlement if he marries; that's what I call hard. Don't you?"

Grenfell had no time to resolve the question, for Sir Within had already come over to propose a rubber at whist, a party to which, as an old member of Graham's, his appetite was not whetted as young Ladarelle whispered, "I wish you joy of your whist; old Wardle revokes, and my father never pays if he loses!"

"Come over and dine with me to-morrow," said Grenfell; "it will not be more dreary than this."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A NEW FRIENDSHIP.

"WHAT a snug place you have here; it's as pretty as paint, too," said Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, as he lounged into the Cottage, a few minutes after the time named for dinner.

"It is not mine; I am only here on sufferance. It belongs to Sir Gervais Vyner," said Grenfell.

"Not the Vyner who sat for Holstead?"

"The same."

"And the man who bought Cloudsley's yacht *Carinthia*, and then exchanged her for the *Meteor*, that won the Cowes cup two years ago," continued Grenfell, who was watching the altered expression of the other's face, as he learned that he was the guest of one so closely allied in intimacy with one of the leaders of fashion; for though the Ladarelles were rich people and well placed in society, Vyner moved in a set, and associated with a class, quite apart from and above them.

"I never met Vyner," said Ladarelle, carelessly.

"He is the man I am most intimate with in the world. We chummed together at Cambridge, travelled together, and would have stood side by side in public life together, if I had not been too indolent to fag at official drudgery. But here comes dinner:" and taking his guest's arm, he led him away literally captive—so completely was he overcome by the news that he was dining with the great Sir Gervais Vyner's dearest friend and oldest companion.

Now, though the Ladarelles were not in that class to which Grenfell aspired, and with whom he hoped one day to see himself, they were on the direct road to it. They occupied what represented an intermediate territory, through which he must pass; and he set himself patiently to cultivate their good opinion—secretly cherishing the hope that a time would come when he could afford to be indifferent to it.

The dinner was exquisite; and young Ladarelle enjoyed, not alone the good cheer, but the freedom of being alone with one to whom he could talk without any reserve.

"You don't half know what a charity you've done," said he, "in asking me here to-day. That dreary old place was killing me. My governor is not what people call jolly. Old Sir Within is about the greatest prig I ever met; and as for the ward, she is either insufferably impertinent, or downright underbred."

"She is exceedingly beautiful, however," said Grenfell, smiling.

"At times—yes; I'll not dispute that. But she has a something half supercilious, half silly, occasionally, that I don't like. Do you think her clever?"

"I have no means of knowing. I never met her till yesterday. Old Wardle declares that there never was her equal—that she learns whatever she likes, without any labour; but it's easy enough to understand infatuation at his age, and he *does* seem to admire her vastly," said Grenfell, slowly.

"I'd say the old fellow was madly in love with her, if the idea was not too absurd; not that it would be a laughing matter for me, though—very far from it."

"How do you mean?"

"I told you last night, that if he were to marry he can charge the estate with a settlement. But that's not the whole of it. Sir Hugh Rivers says that, if he should have a direct heir—— O, yes—it's all very fine laughing; but the world has seen some such cases."

"Very true," said Grenfell; "and we all know what Lord Stowell said of them."

"I know nothing about Lord Stowell; but I know this, that it's no pleasant thing to think there's a flaw in what one was once sure of. I used to fancy myself as much the owner of Dalradern as though Sir Within Wardle was only a tenant."

"I scarcely think, if I was in your place, I'd fret myself about the contingency you speak of," said Grenfell.

"I'll not go so far as to say I fret about it. I don't exactly do that; but it worries me in certain ways."

"I understand," said Grenfell; "it makes the Jews more difficult to deal with—more captious about post obits."

"You have it exactly. That fellow Joel—I can't imagine how he came at it—said to me t'other day, 'I don't like my security, Mr. Dolly; it ain't what I used to think it was.' And what do you think I am paying him all the time?"

"Ten—perhaps fifteen—per cent."

"Guess again."

"Twenty?—surely not more than twenty-five?"

"Forty—ay, forty per cent.! And when I was let in so heavily last May on Grampus, I stood for the whole of Cloudsley's lot, old Joel refused to renew under sixty per cent.! He even threatened he'd go up to Leadenhall Street and have a talk with my governor."

"Which might not have been pleasant."

"I believe you. The governor has only to know that I've been betting in the ring to scratch my name out of the bank to-morrow, and cut me off root and branch. You haven't an idea what these old 'dons' in the banking world think of what they call 'the house.' When my father speaks of 'the house,' he means something that represents the honour of all the Ladarelles—not alone since Adam, but the unborn partners that are to discount and keep deposits for centuries to come. Maybe you have not mixed with these sort of people?"

"Very little; but I have heard tell of their prejudices," said Grenfell, with the very faintest tinge of colour in his cheek as he spoke.

"That's just what my governor is. After the bank comes the monarchy with him; so that you see I must be cautious."

"I know something of Master Joel. It is rather his interest to stand well with me; and, if you like, I will just give him a gentle hint to keep quiet, and not create any disturbance."

"Oh, would you? By Jove! I'll take it as a great service to me. The fact is, I've been going it rather fast. Hawkshaw 'let me in' pretty heavily on 'Caithness,' and then Blunden, as you know, levanted; so that our last settling day was rather a dark morning to me."

"Have you any other creditors than Joel?"

"Nothing very heavy. I owe Davis——"

"Grog?"

"Yes—Grog Davis. I owe him about two thousand; but he never presses. Grog's a gentleman in that respect. It's only when a fellow 'hums' and 'hahs' about whether the thing was all square or not; that's what Grog won't stand a moment. He'll insist on his money then; and, what's more, he'll have a shot at you too, if he can get it."

"Yes, but he'll have his money first. I never heard of Grog Davis shooting at a solvent debtor yet."

"You know him, that's plain enough," said Dolly, laughing.

"Who could have been about town the last ten or fifteen years and not known him? I rather like him too."

"So do I," cried Ladarelle, eagerly, and as though it relieved his heart of a weight to make the confession. "Say what they will of Grog Davis, he's a fellow to do a right good-natured thing; and as for advice, there's not a man in the clubs I'd as soon go to as to him."

"He has a deal of worldly wit, that's certain."

"Ay, and he has more. He knows the exact way to treat every one. I've seen him go up and take the Duke of Dullworth by the arm just as familiarly as you'd take me."

"Yes, when the Duke wanted him; he might do that."

Dolly paused for some minutes, and seemed to reflect. He was indeed, reflecting and considering with himself whether he would make a clean breast of it, and tell Grenfell all—everything that he had on his mind, and everything that he had done in consequence. At length he appeared to have formed his decision; and pushing his glass from before him, he leaned his arm on the table, and addressed Grenfell in a voice of most confidential meaning.

"I wrote to Grog since I came here," said he, significantly. "I told him all about old Wardle, and as much as I could make out about his ward. It wasn't much; but I added whatever I suspected, and I asked what he thought of it. He answered me by the same post."

"And what did he say?" asked Grenfell, for the other had come to a dead stop.

"I only got the letter as I stepped into the carriage, and glanced my eye over it. Shall I read it for you? It's very short."

"Read it then, by all means."

"Here it is," said he, producing a very square-shaped sheet of paper, with a large seal of coarse wax attached, evidence that it had not been encased in an envelope.

"'DEAR DOL!'—That's his way, he'd be intimate with his Royal Highness.—'Dear Dol, your note was writ like one of the queries to *Bell's Life*, and in the same spirit I answer it. The old cove means to marry her——' Eh, what?"

"I did not speak; go on."

"'The old cove means to marry her, and cut you out of the estate, just as Tom Barkely was done by Rixley Drummond—only that Tom was offered the girl first, and wouldn't have her.'"

"He's all right there. Tom Barkely's obstinacy cost him about sixteen thousand a year, and sent him out to India as a major in a marching regiment," said Grenfell. "Go on."

"'This is my opinion,' he puts two n's to opinion, and it makes it read all the more stubborn, 'and as for the remedy, Master Dolly, all I can say is, there ain't two ways about it—there ain't two ways about it,'" repeated Ladarelle, slowly, and as though weighing each word as he uttered it. "Now, will you tell me, what does he mean by that?"

"Read it over again."

"'This is my opinion; and as for the remedy, Master Dolly, there ain't two ways about it.—Yours, C. D.'"

Grenfell took the letter from the other's hand, and pored over it in silence for several minutes; then, leisurely folding it, he laid it down on the table.

"How do you understand him?" asked Ladarelle again.

"It's not very easy to understand what he says here; though, if the words had been spoken instead of written, I suspect I could have come at the meaning."

"'There ain't two ways about it,'" repeated Dolly, moodily, "and why not say which is the one way? That would be more to the purpose."

"It's one of two things, evidently; either you are to get rid of Sir Within, or his ward. Grog is not a very scrupulous fellow; but though he would poison a horse he had laid heavily against for the Derby, I don't think he'd go so far in the case of an old diplomatist. It remains, then, to be seen what is to be done with the ward; he probably means you should carry her off yourself."

"Perhaps she wouldn't come; if she has designs on Sir Within, it's almost certain she would not."

Grenfell made no answer, but sat lost in thought for some minutes, when he said; "Yes; that's what Grog advises; his calculation is, that this old man's infatuation, which, uninterfered with, would have led him into a foolish marriage, will, if it be crossed and thwarted, as certainly break him down and kill him."

"Men don't die of these things!"

"Not men like you and me, certainly; but there is a time of life when existence is held on a very frail tenure; and, at that time, a mere hope extinguished serves to crush a vitality."

"And do you really think he'd take it so much to heart?"

"I know too little of him to give an opinion. When I have seen him some half-dozen times more, and seen, besides, something of his manner towards her, I might risk a guess, perhaps."

"If I was quite sure that I 'stood in' for the double event—that is, to stop her marriage and succeed to the estate at once—I almost think I'd do it."

"Yes," said Grenfell, after another pause, "this must be what Grog alludes to, as the one way of dealing with the matter."

"She'd insist on marriage, I suppose?" said Dolly, in a sulky tone.

"Of course she would."

"That's a bit of a bore. I had not calculated on such a step for these six or eight years yet. Then there's another thing to be thought of: my governor, who naturally will not see the necessity of the step, is sure to be outrageous at it. All that he will recognize will be the very thing he most despises in the world—a love match."

"Could he not be brought to see a much more valid reason for this match? Don't you think the matter could be placed before him in such a light that he must accept that view?"

"No. I know him better. I could tell you at once what he'd say."

"And what would it be?"

"He'd say: 'If she must be got out of the way and married off, get some hard-up sub who can't pay his mess debts, or wants to lodge a few hundreds for the next vacancy; or find some Irish squire.' My governor always thinks an Irishman is ready for anything but paying his debts. 'He'd marry her for a couple of thousand down.' That's what my governor would hit on, without taking five minutes to think of it."

"What if *she* would not consent to such an arrangement?"

"That's as it might be. You'll not find my governor giving any one credit for a strong will but himself. He reasons out every question his own way, and never suspects the mere possibility of opposition."

"That may do in the bank, perhaps, where none can gainsay him."

"He'll tell you it does just as well in the world at large; and he'll point to himself as the best proof of the system."

"I should like to hear your father discuss the question with the young lady herself; she, I take it, has a will of her own, also; and the matter would probably be well debated."

"She'd have no chance with my governor."

"I'm not so sure of that. I have a suspicion that she could hold her own in an argument that touched her interest."

"You know more of her than I do. She spoke to *you*, to *me* she barely condescended a few words. No more wine, thanks. I must be thinking of the road. I have got old Sir Within's horses, and the coachman tells me they have never been out after sunset for the last four years, and if they get cold now it may cost him his place."

"Why not come over and stop here, it might bore you less than yonder?"

"I should be delighted; I could ask nothing better; but I am supposed to be down here on business. My governor is not at all satisfied with the way things are going on. He says Sir Within has cut down too much timber, and he has taken renewals for leases he had no right to grant, and what with his tanks, and fish-ponds, and river-gods, he has left two mills without a drop of water."

"Tell him, with my compliments, Sir Within Wardle will do worse than all these."

"You mean about that girl?"

"Yes."

"That's what Grog says, but I dare not quote *him* to the governor. Tell me, would you have any objection to my telling him that this was *your* opinion?"

"I have not the honour of being known to your father, and a mere surmise of mine would carry no weight with it."

"I don't know that. I fancy he rather took a liking to you last night. What did you do at whist?"

"Lost a few half-crowns."

"Ah, that accounts for it all. He said at breakfast this morning, that though you held only indifferent cards, you played with perfect composure, and it was quite a pleasure to play with you. With a few nights' ill luck you'll stand high in his favour, I promise you."

"It is a cheap friendship after all," said Grenfell, laughing.

"Yes. You may have it for five pounds, but I doubt greatly if you could re-sell it for as many shillings."

"Make use of my favour, therefore, while it lasts, and if nothing prevent, come and dine here the day after to-morrow," said Grenfell.

"Agreed. Here come the fat coach-horses; see how they heave their flanks, only coming round from the stable-yard. I tell you, Grenfell," said he, in a whisper, "there will be a great sale of stock at Dalradern one of these days; and there's a lot I'll certainly not give orders to have bought in. Good-night—good-night."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A WOODLAND RIDE.

It was only at intervals that the sun's rays pierced the leafy shade of a long valley in the woods at Dalradern, where Sir Within and his ward were riding. The tall beech-trees, which stood like the columns of a gigantic cathedral, were met and interwoven above so densely, that the light struggled with difficulty through the foliage, and fell in fanciful patches on the smooth turf beneath.

With noiseless tread the horses moved over that even turf, so that, when the riders were not speaking, not a sound broke the stillness, except the rich carol of the blackbird, or the deep-voiced cooing of the wood-pigeon.

Sir Within rode his strong dark-brown short-legged cob, a beast of grave and dignified deportment, never startled nor surprised by the fretful and uneasy performances of the mettlesome animal at his side, and whose natural hot temper was alternately chafed and caressed at the fancy of his rider; for it was her pleasure to be eternally correcting some imaginary fault, or teaching some new accomplishment. Now, it was his neck that wanted plasticity; now, he bore a little too heavily on the hand; now, the off-shoulder was a thought too prominent in his canter; or, more vexatious than these, he *would* respond to a touch of the spur by a sharp switch of the tail—a breach of good breeding she could not tolerate.

Firmly seated on an animal that defied all sympathy in these mettlesome feats, Sir Within had ample time to admire the exquisite grace with which she rode. It was indeed the very perfection of the accord between horse and rider, which makes the spectator unable to say to which of the two he yields the palm of excellence. No bound nor spring ever took her unawares; and when the animal seemed half mad with excitement, the graceful caress she stooped to bestow appeared to subdue him like a charm.

"Why are you so grave, my dear Gardy? You told me you should be yourself again when that tiresome man was gone, and now he's off—thank Heaven for it!—but you look so depressed and dispirited as if you had not yet tasted the relief."

"True, *ma mie*, quite true. I have not quite convinced myself that we are free of him. His son, however, remains, and is to stay till next week."

"Yes, but how little we see of him. Your kind neighbour, Mr. Grenfell, has him almost every day at dinner."

"For which I owe him all my gratitude."

"I take it, Mr. Grenfell invites him to please himself. He is very lonely yonder at the Cottage. He says he has made no acquaintances, and I suppose that even Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle is better than solitude—not that I should think so myself."

"But you show that too plainly, *ma mie.* There are no feelings we ought so strictly to control, so far as the manifestations go, as our distastes to people in society."

"I think he hates *me.*"

"That would be impossible, child. He may be afraid of your wit; he may not like to encounter your repartee; he may feel, and not unreasonably, that he does not stand high in your favour, and this may impart a degree of constraint to his manner."

"I have not seen the constraint, sir, but I have the dislike, and it was so perfectly mutual, I was glad of it."

"Another mistake, *ma chere,* and a great mistake. The people who really like us need no caressing. The blandishments should be all reserved for the doubtful—just as we administer cordials to the weak."

"I do my best, sir, but I own I do not approach it with a good grace. Do you really wish me to become a favourite with this young gentleman?"

"Nay, *ma mie*, you go too far. Your nature is like a pendulum, that swings if it be but breathed on. I did not say so much as that. I simply meant, that I should prefer if he were to carry away from us a pleasant impression of his visit. His father and I have had some discussions of a kind I cannot easily forget. In a long life of affairs, I have not met one, no, not one, who carries the virtue of candour to the pitch of my respected relative, or who imparts home truths with a more telling sincerity."

"Well, sir, if I understand you aright, I am to captivate Mr. Ladarelle, but not to fall in love with him."

"Mademoiselle," said he, gravely, "there was not such a word as love dropped in the entire discussion. I have told you that with the relations which subsist between the elder Mr. Ladarelle and myself it would be as well if a kindlier sentiment connected me with the young man. We shall probably have matters to discuss to which each of us ought to bring all the courtesy in his power."

"Who cut down the large elm, Gardy?" cried she, suddenly, pointing to a clearing in the wood, where a gigantic trunk had just been felled.

"It was I, *ma chère.* I ordered it; intending to make a vista yonder, so that we should see the great tower; but Mr. Ladarelle has stopped me with a protest, and as I abhor a lawsuit, I think I shall submit."

"Just watch how the Cid will take the timber; he's glorious over a stump."

"Kate—my dear Kate—it's too high; don't do it. Come back, I entreat; I order you to come back!" cried he, as she dashed into the open, and with her horse beautifully in hand, cantered him at the tree. Perhaps it was in the seeming carelessness of her hand—for horses have an instinct rarely deceptive as to the intention of the rider—perhaps a mere caprice, but the Cid swerved as he came up and refused the leap.

The bare thought of such rebellion raised the girl's temper at once. She wheeled him suddenly round, and rode back about fifty yards, and then facing him once more in the direction of the tree, she dashed towards it in speed.

"I command you—I order you to come back!" screamed Sir Within; but she heeded nothing, heard nothing. The horse, now irritated and snorting with passion, came too close before he rose to the leap, and though he sprung madly into the air, he touched—a mere touch with his fore-leg—and came tumbling over, head-foremost, to the opposite side, with his rider beneath him.

Sir Within had covered his eyes with one hand, not to see her take the leap, and he remained thus for a few seconds, waiting to hear her voice and the tramp of her horse as she joined him. At last he removed his hand and looked around. She was not to be seen. He cried her name—he screamed it in his agony.

"This way!" cried she; "I'm not hurt—don't be frightened—come and help me."

Dismounting, he made through the tall ferns and the felled branches and soon gained the spot, from which the horse had only now arisen, and stood trembling over the fallen figure of the girl. "Oh, my life—my darling—my heart's dearest," cried he, kneeling down beside her; "tell me you are not crushed—not injured."

"Only stunned, Gardy, nothing more. It was all my own fault. I rode him at speed; he had no time to gather himself, and the martingale——" As she spoke, her voice grew weak, she leaned her head on his shoulder and fainted.

How did the deep woods resound to that poor old man's prayers and cries for help. He shouted—he screamed—he implored; he offered untold gold to him who should come to his aid. He pledged to give half of all he had in the world to any who should succour her. It was by a caprice of Kate's that they rode without a groom, and he inveighed against his own folly now for the compliance. Madly mingling self-reproaches with his cries for assistance, he grew at length hoarse and so faint with his efforts, that he could with difficulty sustain her weight. Just then was it that she rallied, and with a playful smile said, "Dear Gardy, just pass your hand over Cid's knee. I hope it is not touched."

"What do I care for the horse! are you safe, my own darling—are you not hurt?"

"Not in the least—I think not; my ankle is a little stiff—a mere sprain, no more. This shoulder too——There, don't touch it, only help me up. Yes, of course, I mean to mount again—do tell me if his knee is all right?"

"Only think—without help—without a servant—not a creature near us," muttered he.

"Very dreadful," said she, with an arch smile; "quite compromising, I declare."

"Oh, I have no heart for a jest now!" said he, with a heavy sigh, as he assisted her to rise.

"My sweet little horse," said she, patting him and throwing her arm round his neck. "I did treat you very ill—very ill indeed. It was soft spongy ground, too, and not fair in any way, and you were not in the least to blame. Do you know, Gardy, it was a mere bit of bark that caught his foot; for, after all, it is not above four feet high, is it?"

"I don't know—I don't care how high it is. It very nigh cost you your life, and cost *me* more than I wish to tell;" and he muttered these last words beneath his breath.

"You have never helped me to mount, I think, Gardy! Mind, now, don't touch Cid's bridle; he won't bear it. Just give me a slight lift—that's it; thanks. Oh, how nice to be on the saddle again. If you wouldn't think very ill of me, I'd ask a favour?"

"Anything in the whole world, *ma mie;* what is it?"

"Then, like a dear kind Gardy, let me ride him at it again; I'll do it so quietly——"

"Not for a dukedom—not if you went on your knees to beg it. I declare you have but little feeling in your heart to ask it. Nay, I did'nt mean to say that, my sweet child; my head is wandering, and I know not what I say."

"I hope you'll not tell of my disaster, Gardy," said she, as they rode slowly along towards home. "A fall brings one down at once to the level of all the people who do nothing but fall. Don't smile; I mean simply what I say as applied to matters of horseflesh, not morals, and promise you'll not tell of me."

"The doctor must hear of it, certainly."

"No, Gardy, I'll have no doctor."

"I insist upon it—you shall—and you must, Kate. Surely, when I say it is for my happiness, you will not refuse me."

She made no answer, but passing her reins to her right hand, she laid her left hand over his, and so they rode on without a word on either side.

"Is it not strange that a crush and a tumble over a big tree should make one so very—very happy; but I declare to you, Gardy, I never knew my heart so full of delight as at this moment. Tell me what's the meaning of it?"

"Gratitude for your escape, *ma mie:* the thankfulness that even the most thoughtless feel for preservation through danger."

"No it's not that; the sort of ecstasy I feel is something quite different from all this. It has nothing to do with peril, and just as little with gratitude. It has more in it of pride—that's not the word, but it will do—of pride, then, that you made so much account of me."

"For a moment I thought I had lost you!" said he, and his voice trembled, and his very cheek shook with emotion as he spoke.

"And would the loss have been a deep sorrow—a very deep sorrow?"

He pressed her hand to his heart, and said, in a low voice, "The deepest—the heaviest that could befall me!"

"Was it not worth a fall to learn this?" said she, laughingly.

"Nay, rather, will it not teach you to take more care of a life of such consequence to others?"

"Don't say others, Gardy—say one other, and I am content." As she said this, she drew her hand hurriedly away, for they were already approaching the great entrance, on the terrace of which Grenfell and young Ladarelle were talking and laughing. "Mind, sir, not a word of my accident!" And with this she sprang to the ground before he could offer his hand, and hurrying up the steps, disappeared within the building.

"Won't you ask Grenfell to stop to dinner, sir?" whispered Dolly, as Sir Within, after a few cold commonplaces, was about to pass on.

"Not to-day."

"But I have half done it already, sir. It was a great liberty on my part, but I blundered into it."

"Will you give us your company at dinner to-morrow, Mr. Grenfell?" said Sir Within, without the hesitation of a moment.

Grenfell accepted, and, as Sir Within moved on, turning to Dolly, he said, "Did you remark his agitation—did you notice the embarrassment of his look and manner? Take my word for it, he has made her an offer."

"Do you know it was passing through my mind the very same thought; for as they turned the angle of the copse yonder, I saw her snatch her hand from him."

"Come back and dine with me. Common delicacy forbids you to spoil a *tête-à-tête*."

"I can't take the thing as coolly as you do, Grenfell. It's no laughing matter to me."

"Don't laugh, then, that's all. There can be no reason, however, that you should not dine; so step in, and let's be off."

"I suspect you are right," said Dolly, as they drove away. "The old fool has capped his folly. I whispered to him to ask you to dine."

"I heard you, and I marked the eager way he put it off till to-morrow. His confusion got the better of all his tact, and showed me plainly enough that something had occurred to excite him greatly."

"She passed in, too, without ever looking up; she never bowed to us—did you notice that?"

"I saw it all, and I said to myself that Master Dolly's next dealings with Joel will entail heavy sacrifices."

"It's not done yet," said Ladarelle, with an affected boldness.

"No, nor need be for some weeks to come; but let us talk no more of it till we have dined. Vyner sent me his cellar-key this morning, and we'll see if his old wine cannot suggest some good counsel."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SCHEMING.

THEY sat late over their wine, and telling the servants to go to bed, Grenfell ordered that he should not be called before noon on the next day.

According to custom, his servant had left his letters by his bedside, and then retired noiselessly, and without disturbing him. It was already late in the afternoon when Grenfell awoke. The first note he opened was a short one from Sir Within, begging to excuse himself from the expected happiness of receiving Mr. Grenfell that day at dinner, as a sudden attack of his old enemy the gout had just laid him up in bed. "If I have only my usual fortune," added he, "my seizure will be a brief one, and I may soon again reckon on the pleasure of seeing you here."

The tidings of the illness was corroborated by Grenfell's valet, who saw the doctor travelling to Dalradern with all the speed of post-horses.

The thought of a courtship that ushered in a fit of the gout was just the sort of drollery that suited Grenfell's taste, and as he lay he laughed in derision of the old man and his schemes of future happiness. He fancied himself telling the story at his club, and he dwelt on the opportunity it would afford to talk of "Wardle" as his friend—one whose eccentricities he had therefore a perfect right to dish-up for the amusement of all others.

"Take this," said he, giving the note to his servant, "to Mr. Ladarelle's room;" and, fancying to himself the various modes with which that young gentleman would con over the intelligence, he lay back again in his bed.

There was no friendship—there was no reason for any—in the apparent interest he had taken in Ladarelle. It was not of the slightest moment to him which of the two, if either, should marry Kate O'Hara, save as to with whom he should stand best, and be most likely to be well received by in the future. Were she to marry Sir Within, the house would, in all likelihood, be closed to him. The old minister was too well versed in worldly matters not to cut off all the traditions of the past. "He's sure either to introduce her into life under the auspices of some of his own high connections, or to live totally estranged from all society. In either case they are lost to me. Should she be married to Ladarelle, I—as the depositary of all that was secret in the transaction—I must needs have my influence. The house will of necessity be open to me, and I shall make of it what I please." By this last reflection Grenfell summed up what his experience of life had largely supplied him with—that is, an inordinate liking for those establishments in which a large fortune is allied with something which disqualifies the possessors from taking their rightful position in society. In his estimation, there were no such pleasant houses as those where there was a "screw loose," either in the conduct, the character. or the antecedents of the owners.

These houses were a sort of asylum for that large nomade population of highly amusing qualities and no characters, the men who had not "done" everything, but "done" everybody, and of women still more dubious. In these houses the style of living was usually splendid. Wit has a sort of natural affinity for good cookery, and Beauty knows all the value of the "costly setting" which splendour confers. Last of all, there was that perfect liberty—the freedom from all the discipline of correcter establishments—which gave to every guest some prerogative of a master. You came as you liked, went as you liked, and very often, too, introduced whom you liked. What more could a man do if he were the rightful owner? Now, Grenfell was free of many such houses, but in none was he supreme. There was not one wherein his authority was dominant and his word a law. This he ambitioned; he craved impatiently for the time he could say to the men in his club, "I'll take you down with me to Ladarelle's—*I*'ll show you some real cock shooting—I'll give you a day or two at Dalradern." Would not that be fame—distinction—triumph? Ladarelle, too, was a man made by nature for such a part—careless, extravagant, sensual, fond of amusement, without caring in the least for the characters of those who contributed towards it, and inherently vain and open to the coarsest flattery. With him, therefore, Grenfell anticipated little trouble; with her he was by no means so sure. She puzzled him, and she seemed determined not to afford him any opportunity of knowing more of her. Her avoidance of him was plain and unmistakable.

"Perhaps she fears, perhaps she distrusts me," thought he. "I'll take the earliest moment to assure her she need do neither, but make me her friend implicitly." He understood a good deal by that same word, which in ordinary life is not imputed to friendship. In fact, by friendship, he—as a great many others do—simply meant conspiracy. Thinking and reflecting in this vein, he lay, when the door opened, and young Ladarelle, in dressing-gown and slippers, entered.

"What's the meaning of all this, Grenfell?" said he. "My fellow, Fisk, who is just come over, says that Sir Within is perfectly well; he was in the stable-yard this morning at seven o'clock, and that it is the ward, mademoiselle herself, is ill."

"He won't have us at dinner, that's all I know," said Grenfell, yawning carelessly.

"He says nothing whatever about me; scarcely civil, I think, considering I am supposed to be his guest."

"I'll give you a dinner. You'll pay me with interest one of these days, when you come to that estate."

"That I will."

"Do you know, as I lay here this last hour, I have been plotting out the sort of life a man could cut out for himself in a place like this. You are the sort of fellow to have the very pleasantest house in England."

"I should like to try."

"If you try, you'll win. Shall I tell you, Master Dolly, the quality which first attracted me towards you?"

"What was it?"

"It was this. You are one of the very few young fellows I ever met who was not infected with a slavish worship of the titled classes. How, being a Cambridge man, you escaped it, I don't know; but you have escaped it."

"You're right there," said Dolly; but the colour that mounted so suddenly to his cheek seemed to imply a certain confusion in making the assertion. "You know we had a peerage once in the family, and it is a hobby of my governor's to try and revive it. He offered the present people to contest any two of the Opposition seats, and proposed to myself to go into the House; but I told him flatly I'd rather get into Graham's than into Parliament."

"A much harder thing to do!"

"You're in Graham's, ain't you?"

"Yes; and so shall you be next ballot, it you really wish for it!"

"What a trump you are. Do you know, Grenfell, I can't make it out at all that I never have met you before?"

"I'm some twelve or fifteen years your senior," said the other, and a slight twitching of the mouth showed a certain irritation as he spoke; "a few years separates men as essentially as a whole hemisphere."

"I suppose so."

"Town life, too, moves in such a routine, that when a man comes to my age, he no more makes a new acquaintance than he acquires a new sensation."

"And, stranger still," continued Dolly, with that persistence that pertains to ill-breeding, "I never so much as heard of you."

"I feel ashamed of my obscurity!" said Grenfell, and his pale cheek became mottled with red.

"No, it ain't that. I meant only to say that I never heard of any Grenfells but the Piccadilly fellows, Cox and Grenfells! 'None genuine but signed by us.' Ha, ha, ha!" and Dolly laughed at his drollery, and the other joined in the mirth quite sufficiently not to attract any especial attention. "Not relatives, I presume?" added Dolly, still laughing.

"Delighted if they were!" said Grenfell, with a sickly smile. "I don't think the dividends would smell of curry powder!"

"That's what Cecil St. John says: 'Let the greatest scoundrel in England only leave me his money, and I'll honour his memory.' Do you know St. John?"

"One of my most intimate friends."

"I am dying to know him. Grog Davis says he's the only man that ever took the wind out of *his* sails."

"I'll have him to dinner when I go up to town, and get you to meet him," said Grenfell. "It must be on a Sunday, though, for Cecil shuns all others, which he calls dun-days, to distinguish from Sundays."

"I'd like to wipe off every shilling he owes. I'd like to set a fellow like that clear with the world."

"I'll tell him you said so. It will go a very long way towards acquiring his esteem."

"Well, I declare it's a thing I'd do, if I had my property. I've heard wonderful stories about him."

"And he could tell you still more wonderful ones himself. He's one of those men"—here Grenfell's voice became authoritative and collected—"one of those men who, if he saw himself in such a position as yours, would no more doubt as to what he would do, than he would hesitate taking a fair fence in a fox-hunt."

"And what would he do *in my* place?"

"He'd reason out the thing somewhat in this way: 'If I suffer the old cove to marry this girl, he'll either hamper the estate with a heavy settlement, or, mayhap, alienate it altogether. I'll marry her myself, or, if she'll not consent, I'll carry her off. Abduction looks very big in the law-books, but it's a light offence, except where the woman is intractable.'"

"And would you carry her off?"

"St. John would, I'll take my oath on it!"

"And not marry her?"

"That's as it might be, and if she insisted; for he has three other wives still living."

"But, is the thing possible?"

"Possible! Why, it's done every week of the year in Ireland."

"Ay, but we're not in Ireland, unfortunately."

"That's true; neither are we in France; but it was a French cook dressed that 'supreme' we ate yesterday."

"I see what you mean," said he, pondering slowly over the other's words. "You think one might get fellows who understand how this sort of thing is to be done?"

"If I don't mistake greatly, I know where to go for the very man you want. In an excursion I once made with Vyner in the west of Ireland, we rambled into a wild district of Donegal, where in a lonely region we chanced on a little inn. It is a flattery to call it an inn. It was a small thatched cabin standing by itself in the midst of the mountains; there was not another habitation, I'm certain, within ten miles of it. The fellow who kept it was as rank a rebel as ever graced the gallows; and made no secret of his treason either, but owned it boldly and impudently. I had more than one discussion with him, and learned that the rascal had all the shrewdness and low cunning that pertains to that class of his countrymen. He had not, however, been well treated by his party, and he was not at all indisposed to betray them if he could see his way to secure his own advantage by it. At all events, it was clear to me, that for a case which required craft, daring, and no interference of scruples of any kind, this fellow was eminently suited; and I have often thought, if I needed a man for an enterprise where the law must be broken, and the penalty incurred a gaol and a long imprisonment, I'd go and look up my friend in Donegal as the man for the occasion—not to say that his house would be the very place to afford a refuge beyond all risk of discovery."

Ladarelle listened with deep attention throughout, and when Grenfell had finished, said: "What do you mean by a refuge beyond all discovery?"

"Simply, that for some short time, marry or not, you must be able to baffle pursuit, and for such a purpose I'd back this spot in the wilds of Donegal against the kingdom."

"Suppose we were to fail?"

"We can't fail; she goes willingly—or, if not, unwillingly; but failure is out of the question. Your object is, that she should not be Lady Wardle, is it not so?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"And to secure this, it is worth while incurring some risk?"

"Certainly; but I should like to know the extent of that risk."

"I'm no lawyer, and can't tell you what class of misdemeanor the law makes it; not to say that the offence is one which differs according to the judge who tries it; but the question to which you will have to look is this: If the girl be satisfied that she is really married, however grieved the old man may be, he will never disturb that fact. He'll shut himself up in his castle, and let his beard grow. A great shock at his age lasts for the remainder of life, and he'll nurse his grief till it lays him in the grave."

"Then there must be a marriage?"

"Some sort of marriage, Irish or Scotch—they have them of all sorts and complexions; but English law smashes them, just to show these poor Celts in what a barbarism they are living, and that even their most solemn contracts are a farce, if not ratified by us here."

"So that I could marry again if I wished it?"

"Of course you could. Why, scores of fellows about town have gone through that sort of humbug. Don't you know Lawson—Jim Lawson? Well, he married his sister's governess before he married Lady Lucy King; and they wanted to make a fuss about it; but it was proved that it was only a lark on his part, though *she* was quite serious about it; and the priest, too, was only in deacon's orders, or it was after canonical hours, and it was all irregular, even to the ring on her finger, which Harry Bushe said was copper, and so the Lords smashed it, as they always do these Irish things, and Jimmy married the other woman."

"I wish there was to be no marriage at all."

"Perhaps you do; perhaps you'd like it better if old Sir Within would have the politeness to die off and give you no further trouble?"

"Ah, if he would!"

"But, as he won't—as he is firmly bent not merely on living longer, but actually taking measures to make himself an unpleasant memory when he does go, I suspect you ought to look sharp to your own interests, Master Dolly. But, after all, I find myself pressing like an advocate in a case where the very utmost I ought to do should be to advise as a friend. You know by this time all I think on this matter. It is for you to follow the advice or reject it. Meanwhile, I mean to get up and have a walk before dinner."

"Just one thing more—as to this Irish fellow you speak of. Would he take all the risks—the legal risks—if he were well paid for it?"

"I think it's very likely he would. I don't think he'll bind himself to go to the drop exactly; but I take it he'll not boggle about a reasonable term of imprisonment, and perhaps 'hard labour.'"

"Will you write for him, then?"

"Not without you are fully determined to employ him. If you pledge me your word to this, I will write."

"If I pay him——"

"No, no, I'll have none of that! These Irish fellows, even in their most questionable dealings, have a point-of-honour sense about them, that makes them very dangerous men to treat with. Let them only suspect any intention of a slight, and their old Spanish blood, I suppose it is, takes fire at once."

"Let me have a night to think it over."

"Take a week, take a month, if Sir Within will give it to you. You are your own master, and need not ask for time from any one."

"I'd like to reflect well on it. It is too serious a thing to do without good consideration."

"Do so by all means, and begin at once, for I want to ring for my servant and have my bath."

"I wish you'd have a little more patience; one can't decide on a thing of this sort in five minutes."

"Who asks you, my dear fellow?—who presses you? I only beg to be allowed to get up and dress myself, and a not very unreasonable request, seeing that it is close on five o'clock, and you have been here since three."

"Well, I'll do it, come what may of it. I'll do it."

"Take the night to consider it."

"No, I am resolved on it. I'll do it."

"Very well; we are too late for the post to-night, but I'll write to this man after dinner, and by that time you will have fully made up your mind. Now go, or I'll begin to regret the day and the hour I ever thought of giving you counsel."

"You are the most impatient fellow I ever met in my life," said Ladarelle, as he rose reluctantly, and with unwilling steps sauntered out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WITH DOCTORS.

ON the evening of the same day, Sir Within sat alone in his grand old dining-room. The servants had withdrawn and left him in solitary splendour, for the massive plate glittered on the sideboard, and the blaze of many wax-lights illuminated the three or four great pictures of Rubens' on the walls, and sparkled over the richly-cut glass that figured amongst the dessert, and there, amidst all, sat that old man—pale, wan, and careworn—to all seeming several years older than one short week ago. A small table at his side was littered with letters and law papers; but though he had gone for them to his study, he never noticed them, so deeply was his mind bent on other thoughts. At last he looked at his watch, and then arising, he rang the bell.

"Doctor Price is still above stairs?" said he, in a tone of inquiry.

"Yes, Sir Within."

"And you are quite certain you told him to come to me before he left the Castle?"

"Yes, Sir Within."

"That will do," said he, with a sigh.

Scarcely had the servant closed the door than he re-opened it to announce Doctor Price, a small pock-marked sharp-featured man, with an intensely keen eye, and a thin compressed mouth.

"Well, doctor, well?" said Sir Within, as he came forward towards him with a manner of great anxiety.

"Well, Sir Within Wardle, it is as I suspected, a case of concussion; there's no organic mischief—no lesion."

"What's a lesion?"

"There is no fracture, nor any pressure, so far as I can detect; but there is very grave injury of another sort. There is concussion of the brain."

"And is there danger- be frank, doctor, is there danger?"

"Certainly there is danger; but I would not pronounce it to be imminent danger."

"London has some men of great eminence: which of them all would you select to consult with on such a case? I am certain that you would wish a consultation."

"I have no objection to one, Sir Within, and I would name Sir Henry Morland, as the first man in his profession."

"Then write for him, sir—write at once. Here, in this room, here"—and he opened a door into a small cabinet—"you will find everything you want."

"Certainly; I obey your instructions. I will write immediately; but say in what terms. The young lady is your ward—am I to style her by that title or by her name?"

Sir Within blushed, but it was more in anger than shame; the barest approach to any question of Kate's position jarred upon his feelings like an insinuation, and he fixed a steadfast stare on the doctor before he replied, to assure himself that there was no covert impertinence in the request. Apparently he was satisfied, for in a calm voice he said, "It will be unnecessary to say more than that his presence is requested by Sir Within Wildrington Wardle at Dalradern Castle, and with all the speed possible."

While the doctor was writing, Sir Within walked to and fro with short and hurried steps, his mouth twitched from time to time, and a nervous motion of his fingers betrayed the immense agitation that possessed him, and against which he struggled hard to subdue all outward signs. Had the occasion been a ministerial conference—had the event been one in which a bold front was called for, to cover a weak position, or affront a coming peril—the old envoy would have borne himself well and bravely; no one could have worn an easier look in a trying emergency, or better baffled the searching that would try to detect a secret misgiving. But where was all this subtlety now? Of what did it avail him? He bent before this blow as humbly as a school-girl, and soon even abandoned the attempt to dissimulate, and wrung his hands in passionate sorrow as he went.

"Will that do, then, Sir Within?" asked the doctor, as he handed him the note he had just written.

"I have not my glass," said he, hurriedly, while his fingers held it; "but of course it is all right. You will instruct me as to the fee, you will do whatever is necessary, and you will, also, I trust, remain here. I wish you not to leave the Castle."

"Impossible, Sir Within. Sir Godfrey Wynne is very ill, and I have a very anxious case at Glassnwyd."

"But none of them, I will venture to say, so needful of watching as this. You have just told me how precarious these cases are. Remember, sir, I have some claims upon you."

"The very greatest, Sir Within. But for your munificent donation, I should never have been physician to the Wrexham Hospital."

"I did not mean that," said Sir Within, blushing scarlet; "I did not allude to that. I spoke of old family claims in your father's time. Dalradern was always his staunch supporter."

"I know it well, sir; but a doctor owes allegiance to the very humblest of those who need him."

"A doctor, I presume, is bound to accord the patient whatever of his time he can pay for?"

"Not to the detriment of others who are ill, Sir Within."

"I know of no other than those under this roof, Doctor Price. I insist, therefore, that you remain here."

"I will return before evening, Sir Within."

"If you leave this now, sir, you need not return."

"Let me entreat you to moderate your warmth, and hear me."

"Sir, I accept no lessons on the mode in which I should comport myself. My education is not, I would hope, yet to be made in this respect. You stay now, or you never re-cross this threshold."

"Then I most respectfully take my leave, sir.

As he moved towards the door, Sir Within placed himself against it.

"This is cónduct, sir," cried he, passionately, "for which I was in no way prepared. It is the first time in my life I have seen a physician refuse his services to those who had the right to call for, and the ability to requite them. I will not suffer it."

The doctor moved his head mournfully, and muttered a few low and indistinct words.

"No, sir. I want no apologies. I will not listen to excuses!" cried Sir Within, whose cheek was in a flame, and his eye flashing with anger. "I have done my best—my very best—to misunderstand your meaning; I have tried my utmost to persuade myself that this was not intentional slight; but apparently, sir, you insist that I should know it, and feel it."

"You distress me greatly, Sir Within—and all the more, that I really cannot follow you in what you imply."

"I never imply, sir—I declare—I assert!" and his voice was now shrill with passion. "It is no insinuation I make—it is an open declaration—that it is what scandalous tongues have dared to allege against this young lady's residence under my roof is the sole pretext you have to refuse your services here. Don't deny it, sir; I read it in your confusion half an hour ago. You intend to build a character for high morality on this event. You know this county better than I do, and you are a better judge how far your strict virtue will be remunerative; or perhaps you fancy that I will condescend to an explanation with you."

"No, no, Sir Within. You are too unjust—quite too unjust in all this."

The old baronet never heard the interruption, but went on,—

"But, sir, if I have scorned to make explanations to the first gentry of my neighbourhood, it is not likely I will descend to them for the satisfaction of a village doctor. Go, sir—go! but at your peril one word to gratify the slanderous temper of your clients; for if I hear that you have dared to insinuate, however, faintly——"

The doctor did not wait for him to finish, but hurried down the stairs, crossed the hall, and hastened to the stable-yard; and in a very few minutes the sharp sound of his horse's feet on the ground declared that he was off at speed.

Sir Within had sunk into the chair beside the door from which the doctor had just issued, powerless and overcome. The outburst of passion, what had been but one exit of an overwhelming sorrow, had run its course, and now he sat there wretched and forlorn. Of his late altercation he remembered positively nothing. Something had occurred—something that excited and agitated him. The doctor had said, or somebody had said, he knew not what; but it shadowed forth a sort of reflection on him—for Heaven knows what; and he wiped the cold perspiration from his brow, and tried to collect himself. At last he arose and rang the bell.

"Will you tell Doctor Price I should like to speak to him," said he, in his usual bland tone.

"The doctor is gone, Sir Within; he left the Castle half an hour ago."

He nodded; and the servant retired. After a little while he rang again.

"Let Doctor Price know I wish to see him before he goes away," said he, in a faint voice.

"The doctor left the castle some time back, Sir Within," said the man, in some astonishment.

"Ah!—very true—I remember: that will do."

Once more alone, he tried to remember what had just occurred—but he could not; and, with weary steps, he mounted the stairs slowly towards the corridor where the sick chamber stood.

"She is sleeping, Sir Within," said the nurse, who sat outside the door to enforce silence—"sleeping, but dreaming and wandering on continually; and such strange things, too, she says."

"What does she talk of, nurse?" said he, scarcely conscious of what he asked.

"She be talking, sir, of being a-gathering seaweed on the rocks, and crying out to some one to take care—that the tide is gaining fast. 'It will be soon in on us!' she cries every moment; 'make haste, Patsey, or we'll lose it all!' And then she'll wring her hair, as if there was water in it, and tie it up short afterwards on the back of her head. I never see a young lady go on the same way before!"

"Wandering,—mere wandering," said Sir Within, faintly.

"Of course it be, Sir Within; but ain't it a strange sort of wandering for one bred and brought up as she was?"

"When people rave, they rave," said Sir Within, curtly.

"Yes, sir, so they does; but people born to every comfort and the like seldom talks of going out to look for firewood, or to bring home the goats from the mountains; and that poor sweet dear there won't think of anything else."

"You are a fool, ma'am, or you would never think of attaching importance to what a patient raves about in a fever. I wonder Doctor Price could not have found a more competent person." And with this rebuke he retraced his steps, and sought his own room.

As he sat there, a servant entered with a note Doctor Price's servant had just brought. He tore it open impatiently, and read:—

"Dear Sir,—I have accidentally heard that Sir Henry Morland will be at Wrexham this evening. If it be your wish to see him at Dalradern, pray inform me by the bearer.

"Very respectfully your servant,

"Pritchard Price."

Sir Within at once addressed a most curt and conciliatory note to Doctor Price, requesting to see him and his colleague as soon as would suit his convenience. That there was something for which an apology was needed, he knew; but what it was, how it occurred, or why it occurred, was totally beyond him; his note, however, was polite in every respect, and its conclusion actually friendly. Doctor Price, however, did not make his appearance, but towards midnight a post-chaise drove into the court-yard, and the great town physician entered the castle. He was a short, stout-built, heavy-browed man, stern, and almost peremptory in his manner, reserving all his mind for his patient, and scarcely condescending to notice the friends of the sick person.

"Who is it?" asked he bluntly of Sir Within, as the old envoy politely handed him a chair.

"My ward, Sir Henry, a young lady not fully seventeen."

"Humph! I did not know you were married."

"I am not married, sir. I was not aware that we were discussing that question."

"Let me speak with your sister, then?"

"I have no sister, sir."

"I don't care what the relative is—cousin, aunt, grandmother—if not too old."

"I repeat, sir, I have no female relative here to whom I can refer you. I shall send for my housekeeper, however, who is a most intelligent person;" and he rang the bell hurriedly.

"And this ward—strange thing a ward in the house of an unmarried man—what's her name?"

"Miss O'Hara."

"O'Hara! O'Hara! One of the Antrim family?"

"No, sir; no connection even."

"Oh this is the housekeeper! Show me your patient, and tell me about the case as we go along;" and abruptly returning Sir Within's salutation, he left the room, and proceeded upstairs. "Yes, yes," he muttered, as the housekeeper recounted the symptoms. "Yes; I know all that: but I want to hear how it began. Was there any shock—any accident? None? Mere fatigue—a long ride—over-exertion—a very hot day! Yes, yes, quite common—answers at first collectively, and then goes off raving—that's enough!"

The rough, ungracious man, abrupt of speech, and actually rude in manner, became gentle as a woman as he stole up to the bedside and laid his hand on the hot and burning forehead. She raised her hand, tremulous with fever, and placed it upon his, and said: "Yes; the pain is there!"

"Let us see if we cannot cure it," said he softly, as he sat down beside the bed.

She turned her large lustrous eyes upon him—brightened as they were in the glow of fever—and stared at him steadfastly and long. He was counting her pulse, and she watched his lips as they faintly stirred, as though she could read her fate in their motion.

"Well?" cried she—"well?"

"Well, you are about to get better, my dear child; the fever is decreasing, and your head freer."

"Yes," said she, hurriedly, "the horrid fancies that torment me are passing away, and I can think now. Who are you?" asked she, after a pause.

"I am your doctor."

"But your name? I never saw you before."

"I know that! This is my first visit to you. My name is Morland."

"Morland—Morland—I have read that name in the newspapers, Sir William, or Sir something."

"Sir Henry Morland."

"Physician to the king, I declare," said she, raising herself on one arm to look at him; "and you have come here, all this way, to see me!"

"And very well worth my while it was. It is not every day I chance upon so interesting a patient."

"How kind you are—how pleasant your voice is! it soothes me to listen to it."

"But we must not talk any more now, my child."

"Oh yes, let us talk, it is so delightful; tell me of all the fine people you see daily. Do you speak to them as kindly as to me, or are you more reserved and distant? Do tell me."

"I will tell you all about these things another time, when it will be safer to hear them. You must have perfect rest and quiet now."

"It would quiet me far more to listen to you than to let me think on and on, as I have been doing. You are going away already!"

"I cannot help it, my child; I have many others waiting for me to see them."

"But you wouldn't hurry away from me in this fashion if I were a great person?"

"Pardon me; you are a very great person to *me*."

"How so? Tell me what you mean; do tell me," cried she; and she started up and caught his hand with both her own. "I must know what that means."

"Listen to me, my child," and he spoke in a graver, almost a stern manner; "I can only do the work of my daily life by being very despotic. I have replied to more questions of yours now, than I should have answered to a royal highness. Good-bye."

"Good-bye!" said she, and pressed his hand to her hot lips. "Good-bye; don't forget me."

As the doctor, followed by Mrs. Simcox, left the room, he stood for a moment in the corridor, deep in thought. "Her mind is collected now," said he, at last; "there is only excitement; there is no aberration."

"She has those intervals every now and then, sir, and she'll speak as sensibly as any one; and, indeed, it's hard to say when she is not talking rational, for she is odd and strange when she's well."

"Yes, I see that; she is no ordinary person."

"And no later than last night, sir, when we imagined that she was talking a mere gibberish of her own, our second housemaid, that was in the room, went over and answered her, and there they talked together for more than a quarter of an hour, sir; and I asked Molly what it was, and she said it was Irish. So, when the girl came into the room this morning, I told her to talk it again; but, would you believe it, sir? our young lady began to laugh, and asked what the creature meant by that nonsense. She did not know one word, sir, Molly was saying, any more than ourselves."

The doctor nodded assentingly, as though such a case was familiar to him, and passed on. At the foot of the stairs he found Sir Within waiting for him.

"I will talk to Price," said Sir Henry; "I shall see him to-night, and to-morrow I will take another opportunity of seeing her before I return to town."

"Are you hopeful as to the result?" asked Sir Within, with much anxiety in his look.

"She has youth in her favour," said he, as he buttoned up his overcoat.

"And you think well of her case, then?"

"I did not say so, sir; I don't think any man would go so far; for it will be tedious, and consequently precarious. And there are now and then recoveries that can scarcely be called benefits. How many miles do you call it to Wrexham?"

"You speak of the effects upon the brain—the permanent effects?" said Sir Within, with trembling eagerness.

"Brain or membranes, I don't think it signifies much which. And Wrexham—how far is it?"

"Your postboy will tell you, sir; this case is of much more moment to me."

Sir Henry turned a full steady look on the old envoy, as though he were contemplating an order of being wholly new and strange to him; and then turning to the housekeeper, who still stood at his side, said: "Stop the ice—apply mere cold water; don't talk to her, and no more Irish—take care of that—no more Irish. Good-night, Sir Within;" and stepping hastily down the steps, he entered his carriage and drove away.

"What did he mean by that last direction, no more Irish, Mrs. Simcox?" asked Sir Within.

"La, sir, it was about a thing that happened last night;" and she recounted the incident, at somewhat greater length than we have given it.

"Send the girl to me," said Sir Within, as she finished; "let me speak to her in the library."

The interview lasted about half an hour, and at the end of it Molly was seen to hasten to her room, pack her clothes, and descend to the stable-yard, where a conveyance was in waiting for her.

"This is a hasty way to leave us, Molly," said one of her fellow-servants, as she mounted the cart.

"It's my mother that was sick, and sent for me," said the girl. "Drive on," added she to the groom, for Sir Within was leaning on the window-sill, overhead, and watching the scene.

Sir Henry arrived the next morning to find Kate worse than he had left her; and, though greatly pressed for time, he remained nigh an hour in consultation with Doctor Price, who had accompanied him. There was more fever, and far more of excitement than on the day before, and she talked incessantly to herself, occasionally giving way to bursts of laughter.

"How grave you both look this morning," said she, with a derisive smile, as they arose to leave her bedside. "I think I can guess what's passing in your mind." Morland shook his head in dissent, and she went on: "Of course you would be reluctant to say it, but the simple truth is, doctor, you think me very, very ill."

"So far, you are right," said he, gently.

"Yes, but you suspect more. You believe that I am dying."

"You have many things in your favour, my dear child. You have youth, you have strength, and you have what is sometimes worth them both—good courage."

"You do me justice, doctor, I have plenty of courage, more even than you know of; and I have another thing," added she, while her eyes flashed wildly and her lip shook with agitation—"I have no great desire to live!"

"Come, come, young lady," broke in Price, "it is not at your age that one is weary of the world."

"I never said I was," cried she, impatiently; and then, turning from him as though he were not one to understand her aright, she addressed the other. "May I speak to you alone?"

"Certainly; my friend here will have no objection, I'm sure."

"None whatever," said Doctor Price, as he moved towards the door.

"And you, Simcox, you must go too; and take Nelly with you."

"La, miss——"

"Do as you are told," said the doctor, peremptorily.

"And now we are alone, child," said he, as having closed the door, he returned to the bedside.

"Sit down, sit there," said she, pointing to the chair, "and wait a moment till I collect myself. I don't like that man, his voice jars on me—there is so much in a voice. Yours, for instance, soothes me." He smiled kindly on her, and she continued; "I was not always so captious, but illness makes one very fretful. Ain't it so?"

"Naturally."

"I must be very ill, then, if irritability be the measure. Do you know"—and here she spoke with immense rapidity, and with a jarring vibration in her voice—"do you know there are times, mere moments, in which it needs all my self-control not to scream aloud? Yes, I feel as though I would give life itself to cry out—to fling this weary load off my poor heart, and tell all—all!"

"You must be calm, young lady, or I shall think I have done amiss in permitting this interview."

"Don't call me young lady. The other, that man I dislike, called me young lady. You must call me Kate." He only smiled, as she took his hand in her own burning hand, and said, in a coaxing, caressing tone, "Say Kate—Kate!"

"I am very proud that you let me call you Kate."

"Yes, that's it; and you say it softly, as it should be spoken. It's a pretty name, is it not? No, don't look on me pitifully. If it be even as you fear, there is no cause for sorrow. Answer me one thing," said she, half sternly, "but answer truly. Shall I die of this? There, there! I do not want any more. You think I shall; but I know better. Ay, doctor, there's a keener instinct, stronger than all your skill, and it tells me I have years and years before me; years of such trouble, too, it would be a mercy I were taken now!"

"Calm yourself, my child. I like your self-confidence; but be calm."

"And am I not calm? Count my pulse," and she bared her arm and held it towards him. "It *is* a pretty arm? then say so, frankly. What harm can flattery do me now?"

"I must leave you, my dear child. I have a long journey before me, and much hard work at the end of it. I am sorry, very sorry to go. Don't shake your head, Kate, it is the simple truth."

"Then why not stay?"

"I have told you, child, that many others are expecting me."

"Yes, great people, titled people, people of condition, as they are called; as if we, too, had not our condition. Don't you hate that word? Don't you hate every vulgar sneer at the low-born?"

"I like your generosity——"

"My generosity!" cried she, with a wild hysteric laugh—"my generosity! Oh, yes; my generosity has a touch of genius in it. It reveals to me the unseen, the untasted! For, what can I know of such people?"

Her brows were knitted fast as she uttered the last words, and her lips were drawn tight, as though she spoke under the pressure of some intense constraint.

"There, there!" said he, rising. "I knew all this talking was injurious, and I am much to blame for having permitted it."

"And you *are* going?"

"I must; I have no choice in the matter."

"Well, give me a minute more. Sit down again, and I will not detain you more than a minute or two. When I asked to speak with you alone, doctor, it was to beg of you to make my will. You need not be afraid that it will take long. I have only one legacy and one heir. Now mind what I shall say to you. It may happen—I myself think it will happen—that I shall get better of this fever. Much of my raving—what they call my raving—was such wandering as passes through my head any day; so that it may easily be I have never been so ill as I seemed to be, and all the wonderful stories Mrs. Simcox told you in the window last night—my strange fancies about my bare feet bleeding with the sharp stones—no matter, fact or fancy, it was in my head before this. You are attending to me?"

"I am."

"I was afraid you thought that this explanation was only 'wandering' of another sort; but I see you do not. I see you follow me."

He nodded.

"If, however, *your* skill be better than my second sight—if I can call it so—I have a task for you to do. When it shall be all over, before I am buried, you will take care——but wait, let us do it regularly." She raised herself on one arm as she spoke, and with the other hand she pointed to a small writing-table at the farther part of the room. "Open that desk, and take out an envelope. It ought to be black-edged for the occasion," said she, with a sad smile, "but I don't think it matters much. Yes, that one will do very well. Write now the address I shall give you: 'Mr. Peter Malone.' Show it to me —is it large and plain? No; take another. It must be clear, bold writing. I think I ought to write it myself—of course I ought, and I will."

"All this excitment is wrong."

"Then don't prolong it. Give me the pen and that book to write on. I declare it is *you* that are nervous, doctor. What makes your hand shake?"

"If I am nervous, it is because I feel much self-reproach for all this—this——"

"This—what?" asked she, smiling. "Do give it a name. I am sure you are not angry at my detaining you. You are too kind and too considerate to reckon minutes againt one who may have so few of them; and then, as to this task I impose on you," and she smiled again—" do confess you never heard of so short a will. There, it is all written now. Read it out, that I may see if it be legible."

"'Mr. Peter Malone, to the care of Mr. T. O'Rorke, Vinegar Hill, Cush-ma-Creena, Ireland.'"

"Your pronunciation is not quite faultless, doctor; but, luckily, you will not be the postman. Mind, now, this is to be posted so soon as all is over. No, no—not as it is. I have not yet enclosed my legacy. Take that scissors you see yonder. Open the shutter—a little more still—yes, that will do. Now come here. Cut off the longest and the brightest lock you can find here," and she unbound her golden hair, and sent it floating in heavy masses over her shoulders and her back, and even her face. "Don't spare it. I mean my last legacy to be munificent. There!" said she, taking the long tress from his fingers, "how soft and silky it is—see, too, if it has not that golden radiance the Venetian painters raved about! The old man to whom that envelope is addressed once asked me to give him a lock of my hair; he begged for it very eagerly, as a parting gift, and I refused him. I can give it now—yes, I can give it now. Ask me nothing—I will tell nothing. I thought to have told you all—the whole long, dreary story—but I cannot. There, you are impatient to be away. I release you; only remember, that if I do not die you are to return that paper to me. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly, and will obey you to the letter, my dear child, if you will not give me this tress as my fee for having cured you. Perhaps I have as good a claim to it as that other to whom you would bequeath it."

"No, no, no!" cried she, impetuously. "You never cared for me, you never could care for me, as he does; but keep it if you will. Good-bye, good-bye! One instant more. There is another old man to whom I would send a message."

"Your guardian?"

A scornful curl of her lip and an impatient gesture of her head stopped him.

"Tell Sir Within that I was very grateful to him. He did much to make my life a very happy one, and yet I am so glad to leave it! Speak kindly to him, and comfort him; tell him, if you will, that if he would continue to love me, it were best I should die; for if I were to live, doctor"—and here her eyes grew full and wide, and her gaze steadfast—"if I were to live, I should lose that love."

The wild look she gave, the strange vibration of her voice, and her words themselves, warned the doctor that a period of excitement was approaching, and he drew the curtain and moved away.

CHAPTER XL.

A SUDDEN REVERSE.

"You see it is as well I acted with more forethought, and did not send for our Irish friend," said Grenfell, as he sat at breakfast with Ladarelle. "We shall probably not want him."

"I suspect not," said the other; "the last news of her was unfavourable."

Grenfell stole a look at the speaker, and, quick as the glance was, it bespoke a mingled aversion and contempt. The men who have arrived at middle age, either to form a poor opinion of their fellows, or to feign it—it is hard exactly to say which—feel a sort of detestation for younger men who entertain the same sentiments. Whether it be that to have reached that cynicism has cost years of patient study and endurance, and that they are indignant at the pretension that would assume to have acquired the knowledge without the labour, or that, and this more probable, they do not fully trust their own heartlessness—whatever the cause, I can answer for the effect; and that cold, ungenial man now looked upon his younger companion with a sense of little less than disgust.

"So that her death would not shock you?" said Grenfell, as he stirred his tea, without looking up.

"I don't exactly say that. She's a fine girl, young, and very good-looking."

"Beautiful."

"Well, beautiful, if you like, though I'll show scores just as handsome any day in Rotten Row. But the question is, Does she, or does she not, stand between me and a fine estate? You yourself thought that opinion of Palmer's went against me."

"No doubt of it. Palmer concurs with the Attorney-General; indeed, he seems astonished that any other view was ever taken, as he says, 'No provision of a will can override the law.'"

"Which means, that the old cove may marry; and his heir, if he have one, may inherit the property?"

"Just so."

"And then, in the face of that, you ask me if her life is of such consequence to me?"

"No; I asked if her death would shock you?"

"I don't well know what you mean by being shocked! If there was a suspicion abroad that I had poisoned her, to get her out of the way, then perhaps I might be shocked."

"Shocked at the imputation, not the consequences?"

"I can't split hairs—I never could. If you want subtle distinctions and fine-drawn differences, you must try elsewhere. What I want to say is simply this: I have no ill-will to the girl; I wish no harm to her; but I'd rather she wasn't *there*.

"By *there*, you mean alive?"

"Well, if there was no other alternative—yes, I do mean that. I'm certain old Wardle would never look out for another, and the great probability is, he'd not trouble us much longer; and, as Tom Scott says, by 'nobbling' one horse you get rid of the whole stable. You look greatly disgusted, are you horrified at my wickedness, Grenfell?"

"No," said he, slowly. "I have met a fair number of young fellows like you, and who fancied that to know life they must begin at the lowest of it; the great misfortune was that they never emerged from it after."

"That's severe, I take it," said Ladarelle, as he lighted a cigarette and began to smoke.

"Feigning virtue will never make a saint," said Grenfell, rising from the table; "but mock wickedness will always end by making a man a rascal!" He left the room as he spoke, and sauntered out to the lawn; and now Ladarelle began to commune with himself—what notice he ought to take, if any, of these words. Were they to be considered as a moral sentiment of general application, or were they addressed specially to himself? The context favoured this latter supposition; but then he uttered them as a great truth; he had a trick of that sort of "preaching," and the moment the word preaching crossed him, his anger was dispelled, for who minded preaching? Who was ever the better or the worse for it? Who ever deemed its denunciations personal?

The entrance of his man, Mr. Fisk, cut short his reflections, for he had sent him over to Dalradern, with his compliments, to ask after Mademoiselle O'Hara.

"Sir Within's respects, sir, the young lady is better; passed a good night, and seems much refreshed."

"Here's news, Grenfell," cried Ladarelle, opening the window, and calling out to Grenfell—"here's news; she has had a good night, and is better."

Grenfell, however, had just received his letters from the post, and was already too deeply engrossed by one of them to mind him.

"I say, come here, and listen to the bulletin," cried Ladarelle again; but Grenfell, without deigning the slightest notice to his words, thrust his letters into his pocket and walked hastily away.

The letter he had opened was from Vyner, and even in the first few lines had so far engaged his interest, that, to read it undisturbed, he set out to gain a little summer-house on a small island—a spot to which Ladarelle could not follow, as there was but one boat on the lake.

Having reached his sanctuary, he took forth the epistle, which, from Vyner, was an unusually long one, and began to read. It is not necessary that I should ask the reader's attention to the whole of it. It opened by an apology for not having written before:—

"I am ashamed to think, my dear Grenfell, how many of your questions remain unanswered; but as the Cardinal's private secretary wrote to express the grief his Eminence felt at being obliged to die instead of dine out, so I must ask your patience for not replying to you, as I was occupied in being ruined. It is a big word, George, but not too big for the fact. When I gave up politics, for want of something to do, I took up speculation. A very clever rascal—I only found out the rascality later—with whom I made acquaintance at Genoa, induced me to make some railroad ventures, which all turned out successes. From these he led me on to others of a larger kind in Sardinia, and ultimately in Morocco. A great London banking firm was associated with the enterprise, which, of course, gave the air of stability to the operations, and as there was nothing unfair—nothing gambling in the scheme—nothing, in fact, that passed the limits of legitimate commercial enterprise, at the same time that there was everything to interest and amuse, I entered into it with all that ardour for which more than once your prudent temperament has rebuked me. I have no patience to go over the story; besides that the catastrophe tells it all. The original tempter—his name is Gennet—has fled, the great bankers have failed, and I am—I have ascertained—engaged to the full amount of all I have in the world—that is, nothing remains to us but my wife's settlement to live on. A great blow this; I am staggering under it still. It was precisely the sort of misfortune I had thought myself exempt from, because I never cared much about money-getting; I was richer than I really needed to be; but, as the Spanish proverb says, 'The devil never goes out to fish with only one sort of bait in his boat.' I imagined I was going to be a great philanthropist. If I was to get lead from the Moors, I was to give them civilization, culture, Heaven knows what cravings after good things here and hereafter. Don't laugh, George; I give you my word of honour I believed it. Mr. Ridley Gennet was a great artist, and from the hour he waved his wand over me, I never really awoke 'till I was beggared.' Now, I do believe that you yourself, with all the craft you boast of, would not have come scathless out of his hands. These fellows are consummately clever, and in nothing more than in the quick reading of the characters they are placed in contact with. You can answer for it that I never was a gambler. I have played, it is true; but with no zest, no passion for play. That man, however, knew more of me than I did of myself; he detected a sort of combative spirit in my nature, which gives results very much like the love of play. It prompts to a rash self-confidence and a dogged resolution not to be beaten—no matter how heavy the odds against one. I say, he saw this, and he determined to make use of it. There was a time at which, at the loss of about twenty-eight or thirty thousand pounds, I might have freed myself of every liability; and, indeed, I was more than half inclined to do it; but the devil, in this fellow's shape, hinted something about being poor-spirited and craven-hearted; said something about men who bore reverses ill, and only spread canvas when the wind was all astern; and that, in fact, the people who carried the day in life were exactly those who never would accept defeat. All he said met a ready concurrence from my own heart, and in I went after my thirty thousand, which soon became eighty. Even then I might have escaped—a heavy loser, of course, but not crushed—but he persuaded me that the concern was the finest enterprise in Europe, if emancipated from the influence of two powerful shareholders—men who, since they had joined us, had gone deeply into other speculations, whose prospects would be severely damaged by our success. One of these was La Marque, the Parisian banker, and a great promoter of the 'Crédit Mobilier;' the other an English contractor, whose name I may mention one of these days. They were, he said, to be bought out, and then I should stand the representative of four-sixths of the whole scheme. It reads like infatuation now that I go calmly over it; but I acceded. I commissioned Gennet to treat with these gentlemen, and gave him blank bills for the sums. For a while all seemed to go on admirably. La Marque himself wrote to me; he owned that his other engagements had not left him at liberty to develop the resources of our company to their full extent, and confessed that there were certain changes in the management that must lead to great advantage. With, however, what I thought at the time a most scrupulous honour—though I have come to regard it differently—he hinted to me that while Mr. G.'s position in the 'world of affairs' was above all reproach, the fact of his conducting a transaction with blank acceptances was totally irregular and unbusiness-like; and he begged that I would give him a regular assurance, in a form which he enclosed, that I authenticated G.'s position, and held myself responsible, not merely commercially, but as a man of honour, for such engagements as he should contract in my name. I made a few trifling alterations in the wording of this document, and sent it back with my signature. On the third day after, the London firm smashed, and on the evening that brought the news, G. bolted, and has not since been heard of.

"Since then, every post from England tells me of the steps at which my ruin advances. M'Kinlay, overwhelmed, I think, by the calamity, acts with less than his usual skill and cleverness, and continues to insist that I must repudiate my pledge to La Marque, whom he calls a confederate of G.'s; and, indeed, declares that if we could but secure that fellow's person, we should save a large remnant of the property. These are *his* views, they are not *mine.* I cannot consent to remedy my folly at the cost of my character; and though I have agreed to the despatch of detectives to hunt Gennet, I will not, by any act, dishonour my signature.

"It is at this stage we are now arrived. Whether I am to be drowned by six inches over my head, or six fathoms, is not, I opine, a matter of much consequence. Lady Vyner knows it all, and bears it—as I knew she would—nobly. Her sister, too, has shown a fine spirit. Of course, we have kept so much as we can of the calamity from Mrs. Courtenay; but she is more cast down than any of us. As for Ada, she sustains us all. I declare I never knew her before; and if it were not that the misfortune is to outlive me, I'd say it was worth being ruined to discover the boundless wealth of that dear girl's heart.

"I could fill pages with little traits of her thoughtful affection, evincing a nature, too, that actually seemed to need an opportunity to show it was made for higher and better things than to float along in an existence of indulgence.

"You are impatient to hear how practical we can be. Well, you shall. We have given up our grand palazzo, and retired to a little place about twenty miles off, near Chiavari, where we found a small house to suit us. We have sent off all the servants but three. I doubt if we shall keep old Morris; but it would break his heart to discharge him with the others. I have despatched my horses to be sold at Turin. The yacht is already disposed of. Not bad this in four days, besides writing about a hundred and fifty letters, and giving solemn audience to Mr. Pengrove, of the detective force, come out specially to get from me a detailed description of G.'s person, size, dress, accent, and manner. I vow, till I had the happiness of this gentleman's acquaintaince, I never knew by how many traits a human creature could stamp his identity; and the way in which he pushed his inquiries, as to matters utterly beyond the realms of all the disguises in use, perfectly amazed me.

"It was not, perhaps, a very acute question of mine, but it dropped from me half unawares. I asked whether he thought G. had fled to America or Australia? He replied, 'No, sir; he never had any dealings in those parts. When men bolt, they always follow out some previously-formed train of circumstances; he'll be somewhere on the African coast—I mean to try Tunis first.'

"You know now, my dear George, more than I really meant to inflict on you of our sad story; but I was, in a measure, forced into some details. First of all, one's friends ought to be in a position to contradict false rumours, and I take it I shall have my share of them; and, secondly, you may be disturbed in your present tenure, for the Cottage as well as the Castle goes to the creditors.

"There is, however a small business matter in which I must have more than your advice—I want your assistance. You may remember that when, on our Irish tour——"

There comes here a sudden stop in the epistle, but, in a hurried and tremulous hand, it was continued in this wise:

"Another great misfortune! Poor Luttrell's boy is drowned. My wife has just brought me the news. A despatch boat of the Italian navy has picked up at sea an English sailor on a spar, the last of the crew of the American barque *Squash*, commanded by a Captain Dodge. They were attacked by pirates when becalmed off the Riff coast, and the Yankee, rather than surrender, blew up the ship. This man remembers nothing beyond his having leaped overboard when he saw the captain make for the magazine. He was, indeed, insensible when picked up, and even yet his mind wanders at times. So far as his memory would serve he has given the names of the crew, and Luttrell's was amongst them. He said, too, that he saw Luttrell leaning against the tiller-wheel, with his arms folded, and looking quite calm, a moment or two before he jumped over. The Italian steamer returned to the place and cruised for an entire day, in the hope of saving some others, but none were met with, and there is no doubt now that all have perished. I thought only an hour ago that there were few in the world as unfortunate as myself; but what is my loss compared to poor Luttrell's? If I could possibly leave home now, it would be to go over to Ireland and see him. What is to be done? Can you suggest how the tidings could be best broken to him? Would you undertake the charge yourself? If not, M'Kinlay must do it, though, for every reason, I prefer you. I know, my dear Grenfell, that you shrink from painful tasks, but it is *my* load that you will bear on this occasion, and it will strengthen you to remember that you are helping a friend in his great hour of need.

"If you are not able to go, and if M'Kinlay should also be unable, forward the enclosed note to Luttrell.

* * * * * * *

"I have just seen Martin the sailor. He has told us much about young Luttrell, who seems to have been actually beloved on board the ship; his courage, his daring, his coolness, and his unfailing high spirits, made him the idol of the crew; and this fellow declares, that if Luttrell's advice had been listened to, the ship might have been saved; but the American lost his head; and, swearing that the pirates should never have a timber of her, rushed below with a port-fire, and blew her up.

"I am ashamed to send off all the selfish details that fill the first part of this letter. In the presence of such a calamity as poor Luttrell's, *my* sorrows are unworthy and contemptible; but who knows when I could have the time or the temper to go over my dreary story again? and so you shall have it as it is.

"I am not able to read over again what I have written, so that I am not sure whether I have answered all your questions. You will, I am sure, however, forgive me much at such a season; for, though I had screwed up my courage to meet my own disasters, I had no reserve of pluck to sustain me against this sad blow of Luttrell's.

"Do not refuse me, George, this service; believe me, the poor fellow is worthy of all the kindness you can show him. More than ever do I feel the wrong that we have done him, since every misfortune of his life has sprung from it.

"I must finish to catch the post. I enclose you a copy of the deposition of the seaman made before the consul at Genoa, and an extract from the log of *St. Genaro*, the despatch-boat. If you do go—indeed, in any case—write to me at once, and believe me, meanwhile,

"Your faithful friend,
"GERVAIS VYNER.

"A hearty letter from Lord B. has just come. He says he has just heard of my smash, and offers me my choice of something at home, or in the colonies. Time enough to think of this; for the present, we shall have to live on about what my guardian allowed me at Christchurch. Address, La Boschetta, Chiavari."

With much attention, Grenfell read this letter to the end, and then re-read it, pondering over certain parts as he went. He was certainly grieved as much as he could well be for any misfortune not his own. He liked Vyner as well as it was in his nature to like any one; not, indeed, for his fine and generous qualities, his manliness, and his rectitude—he liked him simply because Vyner had always stood by *him*. Vyner had sustained him in a set, which, but for such backing, would not have accepted him. Every real step he had made in life had been through Vyner's assistance; and he well knew that Vyner's fall would extend its influence to himself.

Then came other thoughts: "He should have to leave the Cottage, where he had hoped to have remained for the cock shooting at least, perhaps a little longer; for this same Welsh life was a great economy. He was living for 'half nothing;' no rent, no servants to pay; horses, a fine garden, a capital cellar, all at his disposal. What, in the name of all foolishness, could make a man with double what he could spend, go and squander the whole in rotten speculations? He says he did not want to be richer! What *did* he want, then? How can men tell such lies to their own hearts? Of course, he intended to be a Rothschild. It was some cursed thirsting after enormous wealth—wealth, that was to be expressed by figures on paper—not felt, not enjoyed, not lived up to; *that* was the whole sum and substance of the temptation. Why not have the honesty to say so? As for Luttrell, I only wonder how he can think of *him* at such a time. I imagine if I were to awake some fine morning to hear I was a beggar, I should take all the other calamities of the world with a marvellous philosophy. It's a bore to be drowned, particularly if there was no necessity for it; but the young fellow had the worst of it; and after all, I don't see that he had a great deal to live for. The island that formed his patrimony would certainly never have seduced *me* into any inordinate desire to prolong existence. Perhaps I must go there. It is a great annoyance. I hate the journey, and I hate the duty; but to refuse would, in all probability, offend Vyner. It is just the time men are unreasonably thin-skinned, fancying that all the world has turned its back on them, because they have sent off their French cook. Vulgar nonsense! Perhaps Vyner would not take that view; but his women would, I'm certain!"

Now, Mr. Grenfell knew nothing whatever of "the women" in question, and that was the precise reason that he included them in his spiteful censure.

"And then to fancy that his money-seeking was philanthropy! Was there ever delusion like it? Your virtuous people have such a habit of self-esteem; they actually believe the thing must be right, because they do it."

Grumbling sorely over that "Irish journey," he sauntered back to the house, in the porch of which Ladarelle was standing, with an open letter in his hand.

"I say," cried he, "here's a go! The house of Fletcher and Davis, one of the oldest in London, smashed!"

"I know it," said Grenfell, dryly.

"Then you know, perhaps, how your friend, Sir Gervais Vyner, has let them in for nigh a quarter of a million?"

"I know more; for I know that *you* know nothing of the matter; but, to turn to something that concerns ourselves. I must start by the mail train to-night for Holyhead."

"Which means, that I must evacuate my quarters. I must say, you give your tenants short notice to quit."

"Stay, by all means. All I have to say is, that I cannot keep you company. Rickards will take excellent care of you till I come back."

"Which will be——?"

"I can't name the day; but I hope it will be an early one."

"A mysterious journey—eh?"

"No; but one which it is not at all necessary to take an opinion upon."

"By the way, you wrote the letter to that Irish fellow the other evening—what did you do with it?"

"It is on the writing-table."

"And I suppose I may make use of it, if I need it?"

"Yes; it's a matter that other things have driven out of my head; but the letter is yours, if you wish."

"And you will stand by me, I hope, if I get into a scrape?"

"Don't count on me. I'm a capricious fellow, and whenever a thing does not come off at once, I never can vouch for the spirit in which I may resume it."

"That's hearty, at all events!"

"No; but it is unmistakable.—Rickards, hurry the cook, if he will let you, and order the carriage for eight o'clock."

"And posters for me at Dalradern at the same hour," said Ladarelle. "Grog is worth a score of such fellows!" muttered he below his breath, as he strolled to his room. "Grog would never strike out a plan, and leave a man in the lurch afterwards."

When they met at dinner, Grenfell took care that the conversation should be as general as possible, never by a chance alluding to any subject of personal interest to either of them; and, as the clock struck eight, and he heard the tramp of the horses on the gravel, he arose and said:

"Don't forget to say all sorts of things to Sir Within for me, and to mademoiselle, too, when she is visible. Good-bye, and 'bonne chance!'"

"Good-bye! I wish I could have had a few words with you before you started. I wish you would have told me something more definite about the plan. I wish——" What he continued to wish is not on record, for once more Grenfell uttered his good-bye, and the next moment he was gone.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE DARK TIDINGS.

It was a dull, lowering October day, sky and sea alike lead-coloured, when the boat that bore Grenfell rounded the southern point of Arran, and opened a view of the island in all its extent. His first visit there had not left any favourable impressions of the place, though then he saw it in sunshine, warm-tinted and softened; now all was hard, bleak, and cold, and the ruined Abbey stood out amongst the leafless trees, like the ghost of a civilization long dead and buried.

"There he is himself, sir," said the steersman to Grenfell, as he pointed to a lone rock on the extreme point of a promontory. "You'd think he was paid for sitting there, to watch all the vessels that go north about to America. He can see every craft, big and little, from Belmullet to Craig's Creek."

"And does he stay there in bad weather?"

"I never missed him any day I came by, no matter how hard it blew."

"It's a dreary look-out."

"Indeed it is, your honour! more by token, when a man has a comfortable house and a good fire to sit at, as Mr. Luttrell has, if he liked it."

"Perhaps he thinks it less lonely to sit there than to mope over his hearth by himself. He lives all alone, I believe?"

"He does, sir; and it's what he likes best. I took a party of gentlemen over from Westport last summer; they wanted to see the curiosities of the place, and look at the old Abbey, and they sent me up with a civil message, to say what they came for and who they were—one of them was a lord—and what d'ye think, sir? instead of being glad to see the face of a Christian, and having a bit of chat over what was doing beyond there, he says to me, 'Barny Moore,' says he, 'you want to make a trade,' says he, 'of showing me like a wild baste; but I know your landlord, Mr. Creagh, and as sure as my name's John Luttrell,' says he, 'I'll have you turned out of your holding; so just take your friends and yourself off the way you came!' And when I told the gentlemen, they took it mighty good humoured, and only said, 'After all, if a man comes so far as this for quietness, it's rather hard if he wouldn't get it;' and we went off that night. I am tellin' your honour this," added he, in a low confidential tone, "because if he asks you what boat you came in, you would say it was Tom M'Caffray's—that man there in the bow—he's from Kilrush, and a stranger; for I wouldn't put it past John Luttrell to do me harm, if I crossed him."

"But, is he not certain to see you?"

"No, sir; not if I don't put myself in his way. Look now, sir, look, he's off already!"

"Off! where to?"

"To the Abbey, sir, to bar himself in. He saw that the yawl was coming in to anchor, and he'll not look back now till he's safe in his own four walls."

"But I want to speak with him—is it likely he'll refuse to see me?"

"Just as like as not. May I never! But he's running, he's so afeared we'll be on shore before he gets in."

At no time had Grenfell been much in love with his mission; he was still less pleased with it as he stepped on the shingly shore, and turned to make his way over a pathless waste to the Abbey. He walked slowly along, conning over to himself what he had got to do, and how he should do it. "At all events," thought he, "the more boorish and uncivil the man may be, the less demand will be made on me for courtesy. If he be rude, I can be concise; nor need I have any hesitation in showing him that I never volunteered for this expedition, and only came because Vyner begged me to come."

He had seen no one since he left the boat, and even now, as he arrived close to the house, no living thing appeared. He walked round on one side. It was the side of the old aisle, and there was no door to be found. He turned to the other, and found his progress interrupted by a low hedge, looking over which he fancied he saw an entrance. He stepped, therefore, over the enclosure; but, by the noise of the smashing twigs a dog was aroused, a wild wolfish-looking animal, that rushed fiercely at him with a yelping bark. Grenfell stood fast, and prepared to defend himself with a strong stick, when suddenly a harsh voice cried out, "Morrah! come back, Morrah! Don't strike the dog, sir, or he'll tear you to pieces!" And then a tall, thin man, much stooped in the shoulders, and miserably dressed, came forward, and motioned the dog to retire.

"Is he savage?" said Grenfell.

"Not savage enough to keep off intruders, it seems," was the uncourteous reply. "Is your business with me, sir?"

"If I speak to Mr. Luttrell, it is."

"My name is Luttrell."

"Mine is Grenfell; but I may be better known as the friend of your old friend, Sir Gervais Vyner."

"Grenfell—Grenfell! to be sure. I know the name—we all know it," said Luttrell, with a sort of sneer. "Is Vyner come—is he with you?"

"No, sir," said Grenfell, smarting under the sting of what he felt to be an insult. "It is because he could not come that he asked me to see you."

Luttrell made no reply, but stood waiting for the other to continue.

"I have come on a gloomy errand, Mr. Luttrell, and wish you would prepare yourself to hear very, very sad news."

"What do you call prepare?" cried Luttrell, in a voice almost a shriek. "I know of nothing that prepares a man for misfortune except its frequency," muttered he, in a low tone. "What is it? Is it of Harry—of my boy?"

Grenfell nodded.

"Wait," said Luttrell, pressing his hand over his brow. "Let me go in. No, sir; I can walk without help." He grasped the door-post as he spoke, and stumbling onward, clutching the different objects as he went, gained a chair and sank into it. "Tell me now," said he, in a faint whisper.

"Be calm, Mr. Luttrell," said Grenfell, gently. "I have no need to say, take courage."

Luttrell stared vacantly at him, his lips parted, and his whole expression that of one who was stunned and overcome. "Go on," said he, in a hoarse whisper—"go on."

"Compose yourself first," said Grenfell.

"Is Harry—is he dead?"

Grenfell made a faint motion of his head.

"There—leave me—let me be alone!" said Luttrell, pointing to the door; and his words were spoken in a stern and imperative tone.

Grenfell waited for a few seconds, and then withdrew noiselessly, and strolled out into the open air.

"A dreary mission and a drearier spot!" said he, as he sauntered along, turning his eyes from the mountain, half hid in mist, to the lowering sea. "One would imagine that he who lived here must have little love of life, or little care how others fared in it." After walking about a mile he sat down on a rock, and began to consider what further remained for him to do. To pass an entire day in such a place was more than he could endure; and, perhaps, more than Luttrell himself would wish. Vyner's letter and its enclosures would convey all the sorrowful details of the calamity; and, doubtless, Luttrell was a man who would not expose his grief, but give free course to it in secret.

He resolved, therefore, that he would go back to the Abbey, and, with a few lines from himself, enclose these papers to Luttrell, stating that he would not leave the island, which it was his intention to have done that night, if Luttrell desired to see him again, and at the same time adding, that he possessed no other information but such as these documents afforded. This he did, to avoid, if it could be, another interview. In a word, he wanted to finish all that he had to do as speedily as might be, and yet omit nothing that decorum required. He knew how Vyner would question and cross-question him, besides; and he desired, that as he had taken the trouble to come, he should appear to have acquitted himself creditably.

"The room is ready for your honour," said Molly, as Grenfell appeared again at the door; "and the master said that your honour would order dinner whenever you liked, and excuse himself to-day, by rayson he wasn't well."

"Thank you," said Grenfell; "I will step in and write a few words to your master, and you will bring me the answer here."

Half a dozen lines sufficed for all he had to say, and, enclosing the other documents, he sat down to await the reply.

In less time than he expected, the door opened. Luttrell himself appeared. Wretched and careworn as he seemed before, a dozen years of suffering could scarcely have made more impress on him than that last hour: clammy sweat covered his brow and cheeks, and his white lips trembled unceasingly; but in nothing was the change greater than in his eye. All its proud defiance was gone; the fierce energy had passed away, and its look was now one of weariness and exhaustion. He sat down in front of Grenfell, and for a minute or so did not speak. At last he said:

"You will wish to get back – to get away from this dreary place; do not remain on *my* account. Tell Vyner I will try and go over to him. He's in Wales, isn't he?

"No; he is in Italy."

"In Italy! I cannot go so far," said he, with a deep sigh.

"I was not willing to obtrude other sorrows in the midst of your own heavier one; but you will hear the news in a day or two, perhaps, that our poor friend Vyner has lost everything he had in the world."

"Is his daughter dead?" gasped out Luttrell, eagerly.

"No; I spoke of his fortune; his whole estate is gone."

"That is sad, very sad," sighed Luttrell; "but not the saddest! One may be poor and hope; one may be sick, almost to the last, and hope; one may be bereft of friends, and yet think that better days will come; but to be childless—to be robbed of that which was to have treasured your memory when you passed away, and think lovingly on you years after you were dust—this is the great, the great affliction!" As he spoke, the large tears rolled down his face, and his lank cheeks trembled. "None will know this better than Vyner," said he, after a pause.

"You do him no more than justice; he thought little of his own misfortune in presence of yours."

"It was like him."

"May I read you his own words?"

"No; it is enough that I know his heart. Go back, and say I thank him. It was thoughtful of him at such a time to remember me; few but himself could have done it!" He paused for a few seconds, and then in a stronger, fuller voice continued: "Tell him to send this sailor to me; he may live here, if he will. At all events, he shall not want, wherever he goes. Vyner will ask you how I bore this blow, sir. I trust to you to say the strict truth, that I bore it well. Is that not so?' Grenfell bowed his head slightly. "Bore it," continued Luttrell, "as a man may, who now can defy Fortune, and say, 'See, you have laid your heaviest load on me, and I do not even stagger under it!' Remember, sir, that you tell Vyner that. That I listened to the darkest news a man can hear, and never so much as winced. There is no fever in that hand, sir; touch it!"

"I had rather that you would not make this effort, Mr. Luttrell. I had far rather tell my friend that your grief was taking the course that nature meant for it."

"Sir!" said Luttrell, haughtily, "it is not to-day that misfortune and I have made acquaintance. Sorrow has sat at my hearth-stone—my one companion—for many a year! I knew no other guest, and had any other come, I would not have known how to receive him! Look around you and say, is it to such a place as this a man comes if the world has gone well with him?"

"It is not yet too late——"

"Yes, it is, sir; far too late," broke in Luttrell, impatiently. "I know my own nature better than you ever knew it. Forgive me, if I am rude. Misery has robbed me of all—even the manners of a gentleman. It would be only a mockery to offer you such hospitality as I have here, but if, before leaving, you would eat something——"

Grenfell made some hurried excuses; he had eaten on board the boat—he was not hungry—and he was impatient to get back in time for the morning mail.

"Of course, no one could wish to tarry here," said Luttrell. "Tell Vyner I will try and write to him, if not soon, when I can. Good-bye, sir! You have been very kind to me, and I thank you."

Grenfell shook his cold hand and turned away, more moved perhaps, than if he had witnessed a greater show of sorrow. Scarcely, however, had he closed the door after him, than a dull heavy sound startled him. He opened the door softly, and saw that Luttrell had fallen on the ground, and with his hands over his face lay sobbing in all the bitterness of intense grief. Grenfell retired noiselessly and unseen. It was a sorrow that none should witness; and, worldling as he was, he felt it. He stopped twice on his way down to the shore, uncertain whether he ought not to go back, and try to comfort that desolate man. But how comfort him? How speak of hope to one who mocked all hope, and actually seemed to cling to his misery?

"They cry out against the worldling, and rail at his egotism, and the rest of it," muttered he; "but the selfishness that withdraws from all contact with others, is a hundred times worse! Had that man lived in town, and had his club to stroll down to, the morning papers would have shown him that he was not more unlucky than his fellows, and that a large proportion of his acquaintances carried crape on their hats, whether they had sorrow in their hearts or not."

It was with a mind relieved that he reached Holyhead the next day, and set out for the Cottage. Vyner had begged him to secure certain papers and letters of his that were there; and for this purpose he turned off on his way to town to visit Dinasllyn for the last time.

"The young gentleman went away the night you left, sir," said Rickards, without being questioned; "but he came over this morning to ask if you had returned."

"What news of the young lady who was so ill at Dalradern?"

"Out of danger, sir. The London doctor was the saving of her life, sir; he has ordered her to the sea-side as soon as she is fit to move, and Sir Within sent off Carter yesterday to Milford

Haven, to take the handsomest house he can find there, and never think of the cost."

"Rich men can do these things, Rickards!"

"Yes, sir. Sir Within and my master haven't to ask what's the price when an article strikes their fancy."

Grenfell looked to see if the remark was intended to explode a mine, or a mere chance shot. The stolid face of the butler reassured him in an instant, and he said, "I shall want candles in the library, and you will call me to-morrow early—say seven."

When Grenfell had covered the library table with papers and parchments innumerable, title-deeds of centuries old, and grants from the Crown to Vyner's ancestors in different reigns, he could not restrain a passionate invective against the man who had, out of mere levity, forfeited a noble fortune.

Contemptible as young Ladarelle was—mean, low-lived, and vulgar—the fellow's ambition to be rich, the desire to have the power that wealth confers, raised him in Grenfell's esteem above "that weak-minded enthusiast"—so he called him—who must needs beggar himself, because he had nothing to do.

He emptied drawer after drawer, burning as Vyner had bade him, rolls of letters, parliamentary papers, and such-like, till, in tossing over heaps of rubbish, he came upon a piece of stout card-board and on turning it about saw the sketch Vyner had made of the Irish peasant child in Donegal. Who was it so like? Surely he knew that expression, the peculiar look of the eyes, sad and thoughtful, and yet defiant? He went over in his mind one after another, of those town-bred beauties he had met in the season, when, suddenly, he exclaimed, "What a fool I have been all this time. It is the girl at Dalradern, the 'ward,'" —here he laughed in derision—"the 'ward' of Sir Within Wardle. Ay, and she knew *me*, too, I could swear. All her evasive answers about Ireland show it." He turned hastily to Vyner's letter, and surmised that it was to this very point he was coming, when the news of young Luttrell's death was brought him. "What can be her position now, and how came she beneath that old man's roof? With what craft and what boldness she played her game! The girl who has head enough for that, has cleverness to know that I am not a man to be despised. She should have made me her friend at once. Who could counsel her so well, or tell her the shoals and quicksands before her? She ought to have done this, and she shall, too. I will go over to-morrow to Dalradern; I will take her this sketch; we shall see if it will not be a bond of friendship between us."

When true to the pledge he had made with himself, he went over to Dalradern the next morning, it was to discover that Sir Within and his ward had taken their departure two hours before. The servants were busily engaged in dismantling the rooms, and preparing to close the Castle against all visitors.

To his inquiries, ingenious enough, he could get no satisfactory answer as to the direction they had gone, or to what time their absence might be protracted, and Grenfell, disappointed and baffled, returned to the Cottage to pass his last evening, ere he quitted it for ever

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SANDS AT SUNSET.

TOWARDS the close of a day in the late autumn, when the declining sun was throwing a long column of golden light over the sea, a little group was gathered on the shore at Ostend, the last, it seemed, of all the summer visitors who had repaired there for the season. The group consisted of a young girl, whose attitude, as she lay reclined in a bath-chair, bespoke extreme debility, and an old man who stood at her side, directing her attention, as his gestures indicated, to different objects in the landscape.

Two servants in livery, and a somewhat demurely-dressed maid, stood at a little distance off, in deferential attendance on the others.

Greatly changed, indeed paler and thinner, with dark circles round the eyes, and a faint hectic spot on each cheek, Kate O'Hara looked even more beautiful than ever; the extreme delicacy of every lineament, the faultless regularity of outline, were as conspicuous now, as before was that brightness which she derived from expression. If her eyes had no longer their look of haughty and defiant meaning, they seemed to have acquired a greater depth of colour and an expression of intense softness, and her lips, so ready once to curl into mockery at a moment, now appeared as if they faintly stirred with a smile, as some fancy crossed her.

She was dressed in deep mourning, which heightened still more the statue-like character of her features. What a contrast to this placid loveliness was the careworn, feverish look of the old man at her side! Sir Within had aged by years within a few weeks, and in the anxious expression of his face, and his quick uneasy glances around him, might be read the fretful conflict of hope and fear within him.

While he continued to speak, and describe the features of the scene before them, though she smiled at times, or assented by a slight gesture of the head, her mind was wandering—far, far away—to other thoughts and other places, and her fingers played feverishly with a letter, which she opened and closed up again time after time.

"I am afraid, *ma mie*," said he, with a tone of half reproach, "that your letter there has usurped all your interest, and my eloquence as cicerone gone quite for nothing."

"No, Gardy, I heard you with much pleasure. What did you say that rock was called?"

"That rock, mademoiselle," said he, dryly, "is a wreck, and I was vain enough to have believed that my narrative of the incident had moved you."

"I am so weak, Gardy, so very weak," said she, plaintively, as she laid her hand on the back of his, "that I follow anything with difficulty."

"My sweet child, how cruel of me to forget it. Are we lingering too long on these sands?"

"Oh no; let us stay here some time longer. I want to see the sun go down, it is so long since I saw a sunset."

He drew her shawl around her carefully, and sheltered her with his umbrella against the scarcely breathing wind.

"How kind you are, how good," said she, softly; and then, with a playful lightness, added, "how courtier-like, too."

"Why courtier-like, *ma mie?*" said he.

"Is it not like a courtier," said she, "to treat a peasant-girl as if she were a princess? You would not even ask me when I saw my last sunset, lest I should have to tell you that it was as I stood barefooted on the beach, the tangled seaward dripping over me."

"How can you like to pain me by talking of these things?"

"But we must talk of them, Gardy. You know we think of them; and this letter—this letter," said she, tapping it with her finger impatiently, "must be answered one day."

"And there is but one answer to give, Kate," said he, sharply. "I will not consent. He who now assumes the uncle——"

"He *is* my uncle, sir," said she, haughtily. "It is scarcely generous to deny me whatever good blood I can lay claim to."

"My child, my dear child," if you but knew how I love whatever loves you, you would not have uttered this reproach."

"My mother's sister's husband is surely my uncle," said she, coldly, and not heeding his protestation. "I never heard that a *mésalliance* could cancel the ties of kindred."

"None ever said so, Kate."

"You said as much, sir; you said, 'assumes the uncle!'"

"I meant in a different sense, my dear child. I meant, that he wanted to impose an authority which mere relationship would not give him."

"Read his letter again, sir—pray read it."

"No, my child; it has given me too much pain already."

"I think you are not just to him, Gardy," said she, caressingly. "May I read it to you? Well, a part of it?"

"Once more, no, Kate. His argument is, that as he is now childless, he has the right to claim your love and affection, to replace what he has lost; that, as your nearest of kin, you cannot refuse him; and that, if you do—mark the insinuation—the reasons will be, perhaps, based on considerations apart from all affection."

"I think he had the right to say that," said she, firmly.

"There was one thing, however, he had no right to say," said the old man, haughtily; "that to continue to reside under my roof was to challenge the opinion of a world never slow to be censorious."

"And there, again, I think he was not wrong."

"Then you love me no longer, Kate!" said he, with intense emotion.

"Not love you—not love you! Then, what do I love? Is it nothing to know that every happiness I have I owe to you—that all the enjoyment of a life more bright than a fairy tale, comes from you? That from your generous indulgence I have learned to think mere existence something like ecstasy, and awake each day as to a fête?"

"Say on, dearest, say on; your words thrill through me like a gentle music."

"He does not offer me these; but he says, 'Come to what you shall call your home, and never blush to say so.'"

"It is too insolent!"

"He says, 'As my daughter by adoption, you shall bear my name.' I am to be a Luttrell—Kate Luttrell, of Arran!"

"And for this poor name you would barter all my love, all my affection, all my hope?"

"It is a great and noble name, sir! There were Lords of Arran called Luttrell in the thirteenth century!"

"You have told me of them," said he, peevishly.

"Too proud and too haughty to accept titles, sir."

"I have a name that the first in the land would not scorn," said he, in a voice of blended pride and anger—"and my fortune is certainly the equal of a barren rock in the Atlantic."

"You are not my uncle, sir," said she, softly.

"No, Kate; but——" He stopped, the colour fled from his cheek, and he seemed unable to continue. "Has any tender love for you equalled mine?"

"Stop there!" said she, fiercely; "my favour is not put up to auction, and to fall to the highest bidder. When you have said that my uncle is poor, you have said all that can be laid to his charge." She closed her eyes, and, seeming to speak to herself, murmured: "The poorer, the more need has he of affection."

"I see it all—all!" said he, bitterly. "You wish to leave me."

She made no answer, but sat staring vacantly over the sea.

"Better to say so, my child—better to own that this life has ceased to give you pleasure. But if you told me, Kate, that you would like to travel, to see other countries, to mix with the world, and partake of the enjoyments——"

"How—as what?" said she, impatiently. "It was but a few months ago you received some strangers at your house, and have you forgotten how they treated me? And do you believe, sir, that the world will have more reserve than the guests under your roof? Who is she? is not answered so easily as one may think. It would take blood to wash out the stain of 'What is she?'"

The old man walked rapidly up and down; he wiped the drops that stood on his brow, and muttered uneasily to himself: "And why not? To whom have I to render an account? Who shall dare to question me? Am I to be turned from my path by a sneer and a sarcasm? Is the ribald gossiping of a club to be of more weight with me than my whole happiness?"

She watched the conflict, and saw every struggle that shook him; she could even mark the vacillating fortunes of the fight—when he conquered, and when he fell back, discomfited and beaten.

"Tell me, Kate," said he, at last, as he approached her, "is there any condition you can propose by which I may secure myself against desertion?"

"There would be no desertion, Gardy. You could come and see me in my new home. I would do my utmost to hide its poverty. Who knows if my ingenious devices might not amuse you. My uncle, too, might permit me—no, perhaps not that——" said she, stopping, in some confusion.

"What is it he wouldn't permit, Kate?"

"I don't know; I was talking to myself, I believe, and I feel weary and feverish too. Gardy, let us not speak more of this now; it oppresses me. And see! there goes down the sun, and I have not enjoyed all its gorgeous colour over the waters."

"I wish you would tell me what Mr. Luttrell might not permit."

"He'd not permit me to stay out on the sea-shore till the evening dew had fallen," said she, laughing. "Tell them to take me back."

"Yes, darling, we have lingered here too long. It was my fault."

And now the little procession moved slowly across the sands towards the town; passing through small mean-looking streets, they gained the place where their hotel stood. Groups of idlers were about—townsfolk and a few strangers—who made way for them to pass. Some respectfully enough—the show of rank suffices at times to exact this—others, more venturesome, stared at the beautiful girl, and then looked at the worn and feeble figure who walked beside her. That they were English was plain enough, and was taken as a reason to comment on them without reserve.

Sir Within turned looks of anger and defiance around him; he gave them to understand that he could overhear their insolence, and he sought with his eye through the crowd to see one —even one—sufficiently like a gentleman, to hold him responsible for the impertinence.

"Neither wife nor daughter, I'll wager a 'cent-sous' piece," said one, as they passed under the arched doorway.

Sir Within stepped back, when Kate said, suddenly, "I mean to walk up stairs; give me your arm, sir;" and as they moved slowly on, she whispered, "How can it be helped, Gardy?" and then, with a laugh, added, "it is a maxim of your own, that it is the unmannerly people take care of the public morals."

It was a subtle flattery to quote himself, which Sir Within thoroughly appreciated, and as he took leave of her at the door of her room he was almost calm again.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE INSULT.

When Kate had gained her room she locked the door, and throwing off her shawl and bonnet, sat down before the glass; her hair fell heavily down in the rude carelessness with which she flung her bonnet from her, and now, with a faint tinge of colour in her cheek—the flush of a passing excitement—she looked very beautiful.

"So," said she, smiling at her image, "it is the old story, 'Qu'en dira le Monde?' The dear old man was very, very fond. He admired me very much; I pleased him—I amused him—I made his life somewhat brighter than he would have found it rambling amongst his Titians and Peruginos; but, with all that, he couldn't face the terrible question, What will the world say? Ma foi, Mademoiselle Kate, the confession is not flattering to you! Most people would call me very inexpert that I had not made that grand old place my own before this. I had the field all to myself—no rivalry, no interference—and certainly it was a great opportunity. Perhaps I was too much occupied in enjoying my happiness; perhaps I took no note of time; and, perhaps, if I ever thought at all, I thought I could win the game whenever I liked, and now I awake to discover that there is something that he fears more than he loves me; and that the dear old dowager world, that shakes down reputations with a nod and blasts pretensions with a stare, will declare a strict blockade against the distinguished Sir Within Wardle and that girl—lucky if they do not say, 'that creature'—he married. Ought he not to have had a spirit above this? Ought he not to have been able to say, 'I am rich enough to buy this bauble, and if the wearing it gives me pleasure, I can forget your sarcasms? I like the life she can throw around me; which of you all could give such colour to my existence?' He might have said this, but he did not. He heard me talk of a new home, and a new name, and he would not offer me his own. He saw and felt bitterly, too, how my position compromised me. I took care he should see it, but no thought of separation crossed him, or, if it did, stronger than all was the dead query, 'Qu'en dira le Monde?'

"There are things one cannot believe possible till they have happened; and, even then, some strange uncertainty pervades the mind that they have not been read aright. This is one of them. No one could have persuaded me this morning that this prize was not mine whenever I cared to claim it. What a fall to my pride! How little must I feel myself, that after all these years of subtle flattery I might as well have been with the Vyners—living with creatures of my own nature—giving affection and getting it—cultivating the heart in the rich soil of hopes and fears, and loves, and trials, and not wearing a mask till it had stiffened into my very features. And he refused me—yes, refused me; for there was no maiden bashfulness in the terms of my offer. I said, I go back to be the niece, or I stay to be the wife; and his reply was, 'Qu'en dira le

Monde?' I suppose he was right—I am sure he was; but I hate him for it—how I hate him!" She arose and walked the room with long and measured steps for a while in silence, and then burst out: "What would I not give to be revenged for this? Some vengeances there are he would feel bitterly. Should he meet me in the world—the great world, for instance—the wife of some one, his equal, see me courted, and fêted, and flattered; hear of me at all times and all places, and learn that this 'Monde'—that is his god—had adopted me amongst his spoiled children, I think I know the dark despair that would gather around him as he muttered to himself, 'And she might have been mine—she had been mine for the asking—she offered herself'; ay, he might say so, if he wished to add insult to my memory; 'and I only replied, "The world would not bear it!"' How I hate him! How I hate him! If I cannot be revenged as I wish, I will be revenged as I can. I shall leave him—go at once. He has passed his last of those blissful days, as he loves to call them; and he shall awake to see his life in all the weariness of desertion. Not a look, not a sound; not a laugh, not a song to cheer him. With every spot full of memories of me, he shall be haunted by a happiness that will never return to him. I know that in his misery he will ask me to forgive the past and be his wife; and if the alternative were to be the wretchedness I sprung from, I'd go back to it!

"I do not know—in all likelihood I shall never know—what this heart of mine could feel of love, but I know its power of hatred, and so shall Sir Within, though it may cost me dear to buy it.

"Your repentance may come as early as you please, it shall avail you nothing. It may be even now; I almost thought I heard his foot on the stair; and I know not whether I would not rather it came now, or after months of heart suffering and sorrow. I was slighted—he weighed the beauty that he admired, and the love he thought he had gained, against the mockeries of some score of people whose very faces he has forgotten, and 'Qu'en dira le Monde' had more power over him than all my tenderness, all my wit, and all my beauty.

"Is it not strange that, with all his boasted keenness to read people's natures, he should know so little of mine? To think that I could stand there and see the struggle between his pride of station and what he would call his 'passion'—that I could tamely wait and see how I was weighed in the balance and found wanting—that I could bear all this unmoved, and then return to my daily life, without an attempt to resent it?

"It is true, till this letter came from my uncle, there was no pressure upon him. None in the wide world was more friendless than myself. His life might have gone on as heretofore, and if a thought of me or of my fate invaded, he might have dismissed it with the excuse that he could mention me in his will; he could have bequeathed me enough to make me a desirable match for the land-steward or the gardener!

"How I bless my uncle Luttrell for his remembrance of me! It is like a reprieve arriving when the victim was on the scaffold. He shall see with what gladness I accept his offer. If the conditions had been ten times as hard, I would not quarrel with one of them. Now, then, to answer him, and that done, Sir Within, you run no danger of that scandal-loving world you dread so much! For if you came with the offer of all your fortune at my feet, I'd spurn you!"

She opened her writing-desk, and sat down before it. She then took out Luttrell's letter, and read it carefully over. "I must take care that my answer be as calm and as unimpassioned as his own note. He makes no protestation of affection—neither shall I. He says nothing of any pleasure that he anticipates from my companionship—I will be as guarded as himself." She paused for a moment or two, and then wrote:

"My dear Uncle,—though your letter found me weak and low after a severe illness, its purport has given me strength to answer you at once. I accept.

"It would be agreeable to me if I could close this letter with these words, and not impose any further thought of myself upon you; but it is better, perhaps, if I tell you now and for ever that you may discharge your mind of all fears as to what you call the sacrifices I shall have to make. I hope to show you that all the indulgences in which I have lived make no part of my real nature. You have one boon to confer on me worth all that wealth and splendour could offer—your name. By making me a Luttrell, you fill the full measure of my ambition.

"For whatever share of your confidence and affection you may vouchsafe me, I will try to be worthy; but I will not importune for either, but patiently endeavour to deserve them. My life has not hitherto taught many lessons of utility. I hope duty will be a better teacher than self-indulgence. Lastly, have no fears that my presence under your roof will draw closer around you the ties and the claims of those humble people with whom I am connected. I know as little of them as you do. They certainly fill no place in my affection; nor have I the pretence to think I have any share in theirs. One old man alone have I any recollection of—my mother's father—and if I may judge by the past, he will continue to be more influenced by what tends to my advantage, than what might minister to the indulgence of his own pride. He neither came to see me at Sir Gervais Vyner's, nor Dalradern; and though I have written to him once or twice, he never sought to impose himself as a burden upon me. Of course, it will be for you to say if this correspondence should be discontinued.

"You will see in these pledges, that I give in all frankness, how much it will be my ambition to be worthy of the noble name you allow me to bear.

"There is no necessity to remit me any money. I have ample means to pay for my journey; and as there are circumstances which I can tell you of more easily than I can write, requiring that I should leave this at once, I will do so immediately after posting the present letter. I will go direct to the hotel you speak of at Holyhead, and remain there till your messenger arrives to meet me.

"You distress me, my dear uncle, when you suggest that I should mention any articles that I might require to be added to your household for my comfort or convenience. Do not forget, I beg, that I was not born to these luxuries, and that they only attach to me as the accidents of a station which I relinquish with delight, when I know that it gives me the right to sign myself,

"Your loving niece,
"KATE LUTTRELL."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE FLIGHT.

THE day was just breaking as Kate, carrying a small bundle in her hand, issued noiselessly from the deep porch of the hotel, and hastened to the pier.

The steamboat was about to start, and she was the last to reach the deck, as the vessel moved off. It was a raw and gusty morning, and the passengers had all sought shelter below, so that she was free to seek a spot to herself unmolested and unobserved.

As she turned her farewell look at the sands, where she had walked on the evening before, she could not believe that one night—one short night had merely filled the interval. Why, it seemed as if half a life-time had been crowded into the space.

Within those few hours how much had happened! A grand dream of ambition scattered to the winds—a dream that for many a day had filled her whole thoughts, working its way into every crevice of her mind, and so colouring all her fancies that she had not even a caprice untinged by it. To be the mistress of that old feudal castle—to own its vast halls and its tall towers—to gaze on the deep-bosomed woods that stretched for miles away, and feel that they were her own! To know that at last she had gained a station and a position that none dared dispute; "For," as she would say, "the world may say its worst of that old man's folly; they may ridicule and deride him. Of me they can but say that I played boldly, and won the great stake I played for." And now the game was over, and she had lost! What a reverse was this! "Yesterday surrounded with wealth, cared for, courted, my slightest wish consulted, how fair the prospect looked! And now, alone, and more friendless than the meanest around me! And was the fault mine! How hard to tell. Was it that I gave him too much of my confidence, or too little? Was my mistake to let him dwell too much on the ways and opinions of that great world that he loved so well? Should I not have tried rather to disparage than exalt it? And should I not have sought to inspire him with a desire for a quiet, tranquil existence—such a life as he might have dreamed to lead in those deep old woods around his home? To the last," cried she, to herself—"to the last, I never could believe that he would consent to lose me! Perhaps he never thought it would come to this; perhaps he fancied that I could not face that wretchedness from which I came; perhaps he might have thought that I myself was not one to relinquish so good a game, and rise from the table at the first reverse. But what a reverse! To be so near the winning-post and yet lose the race! And how will he bear it? Will he sink under the blow, or will that old pride of blood of which he boasts so much come to his aid and carry him through it? How I wish—oh, what would I not give to see him, as he tears open my last letter, and sees all his presents returned to him! Ah, if he could but feel with what a pang I parted with them. If he but knew the tears the leave-taking cost me. If he but saw me as I took off that necklace I was never to wear again, feeling like one who was laying down her beauty to go forth into the world without a charm, he might, perchance, hope to win me back again. And would that be possible? My heart says no. My heart tells me, that before I can think of a fortune to achieve, there is an insult to avenge. He slighted me—yes, he slighted me! There was a price too high for all my love, and he let me see it. There was his fault—he let me see it! It was my dream for many a year to show the humble folk from whom I came what my ambition and my capacity could make me; and I thought of myself as the proud mistress of Dalradern without a pang for all the misery the victory would cost me. Now the victory has escaped me, and I go back, so far as my own efforts are concerned, defeated! What next—ay, what next?"

As the day wore on, every incident of her ordinary life rose before her. Nine o'clock. It was the hour the carriage came to take her to her bath. She bethought her of all the obsequious attention of her maid, that quiet watchfulness of cunning service, the mindful observance that supplies a want and yet obtrudes no thought of it. The very bustle of her arrrival at the bathing place had its own flattery. The eager attention, the zealous anxiety of the servants, that showed how, in her presence, all others were for the time forgotten. She knew well—is beauty ever deficient in the knowledge?—that many came each morning only to catch a glimpse of her. Her practised eye had taught her, even as she passed, to note what amount of tribute each rendered to her loveliness; and she could mark the wondering veneration here, the almost rapturous gaze of this one, and not unfrequently the jealous depreciation of that other.

Eleven o'clock. She was at breakfast with Sir Within, and he was asking her for all the little events of the morning. And what were these? A bantering narrative of her own triumphs —how well she had looked--how tastefully she was dressed--how spitefully the women had critized the lovely hat she swam in, and which she gave to some poor girl as she came out of the water—a trifle that had cost some "louis" a few days before.

It was noon—the hour the mail arrived from Brussels and Sir Within would come to present her with the rich bouquet of rare flowers, despatched each morning from the capital. It was a piece of homage he delighted to pay, and she was wont to accept it with a queen-like condescension. "What a strange life of dreary indulgence—of enjoyments multiplied too fast to taste—of luxuries so lavished as almost to be a burden—and how unreal it was all!" so thought she, as they drew near the tall chalk cliffs of the English coast, and the deck grew crowded with those who were eagerly impatient to quit their prison-house.

For the first time for a long while did she find herself unnoticed and unattended to; none of that watchful, obsequious attention that used to track her steps was there. Now people hurried hither and thither, collecting their scattered effects, and preparing to land. Not one to care for her, who only yesterday was waited on like royalty!

"Is this your trunk, miss?" asked a porter.

"No this is mine," said she, pointing to a bundle.

"Shall I carry it for you, my dear?" said a vulgar-looking and over-dressed young fellow, who had put his glass in his eye to stare at her.

She muttered but one word, but that it was enough seemed clear, as his companion said, "I declare I think you deserved it!"

"It has begun already," said she to herself, as she walked slowly along towards the town. "The bitter conflict with the world, of which I have only heard hitherto, I now must face. By this time he knows it; he knows that he is desolate, and that he shall never see me more. All the misery is not, therefore, mine; nor is mine the greater. I have youth and can hope; he cannot hope; he can but grieve on to the last. Well, let him go to that world he loves so dearly, and ask it to console him. It will say by its thousand tongues, 'You have done well, Sir Within. Why should you have allied yourself with a low-born peasant-girl? How could her beauty have reconciled you to her want of refinement, her ignorance, her coarse breeding?' Ah, what an answer could his heart give, if he but dared to utter it; for he could tell them I was their equal in all their vaunted captivations! Will he have the courage to do this? Or will he seek comfort in the falsehood, that belies me?"

In thoughts like these, ever revolving around herself and her altered fortunes, she journeyed on, and by the third day arrived at Holyhead. The rendezvous was given at a small inn outside the town called "The Kid," and directions for her reception had been already forwarded there. Two days elapsed before her uncle's messenger arrived—two days that seemed to extend to as many years! How did her ever-active mind go over in that space all her past life, from the cruel sorrows of her early days, to the pampered existence she had led at Dalradern? She fancied what she might have been, if she had never left her lowly station, but grown up amongst the hardships and privations of her humble condition. She canvassed in her mind the way in which she might have either conformed to that life, or struggled against it. "I cannot believe," said she, with a saucy laugh, as she stood and looked at herself in the glass, "that these arms were meant to carry sea-wrack, or that these feet were fashioned to clamber shoeless up the rocks! And yet if destiny had fixed me there, how should I have escaped? I cannot tell, any more than I can tell what is yet before me!

And what a fascination there is in this uncertainty! What a wondrous influence has the unknown! How eventful does the slightest action become, when it may lead to that which can determine a life's fortune! Even now, how much is in my power! I might go back, throw myself at that old man's feet, and tell him that it was in vain I tried it—I could not leave him. I might kneel there till he raised me, and when he did so, I should be his wife, a titled lady, and mistress of that grand old castle! Could I do this? No: no more than I could go and beg the Vyners to have pity on me and take me back; that my heart clung to the happiness I had learned to feel amongst them; and that I would rather serve them as a menial than live away from them. Better to die than this. And, what will this life at Arran be? This uncle, too, I dread him; and yet I long to see him. I want to hear him call me by his own name, and acknowledge me as a Luttrell. Oh, if he had but done this before—before I had travelled this weary road of deception and falsehood! Who knows? Who knows?"

"Are you the young lady, miss, that's expecting an elderly gentleman?" said the housemaid, entering hastily.

"Where from? How did he come?" cried Kate, eagerly; for her first thought was, it might be Sir Within.

"He came by the Irish packet, miss."

"Yes, that is quite right. If he asks for Miss Luttrell, you may say I am ready to see him."

In a minute or two after she had given this order, the girl again opened the door, saying:—

"Mr. Coles, miss;" and introduced a florid, fussy-looking little man, with a manner compounded of courtesy and command.

"You may leave the room, young woman," said he to the maid; and then approaching Kate, added, "I have the honour to speak to Miss Luttrell?"

She bowed a quiet assent, and he went on:—

"I'm chief managing clerk of Cane and Co., Miss Luttrell, from whom I received instructions to wait on you here, and accompany you to Westport, where Mr. John Luttrell will have a boat ready for you."

He delivered this speech with a something half-peremptory, as though he either suspected some amount of resistance to his authority, or imagined that his credentials might be questioned.

"Have you no letter for me, sir?" asked she, calmly.

"There was a letter from Mr. Luttrell to Mr. George Cane, Miss Luttrell, explaining why he was not himself able to come over and meet you."

"Was he ill, sir?"

"No, not exactly ill, Miss Luttrell, though he is never what one can call well."

"I am astonished he did not write to me," said she, in a low, thoughtful tone.

"He is not much given to writing, Miss Luttrell, at any time, and of late we have rarely heard of him beyond a line or two. Indeed, with respect to my present journey, all he says is, 'Send some one in your confidence over to Holyhead by the first packet to inquire for Miss Luttrell, or Miss O'Hara—she may be known by either name—and conduct her to Eldridge's Hotel, Westport. The young lady is to be treated with all consideration.' These are his words, miss, and I hope to follow them."

"It is very kind," said she slowly, and half to herself.

"It's a Frenchified sort of phrase, 'all consideration,' but I take its meaning to be, with every deference to your wishes—how you would like to travel, and where to stop. Mr. George, however, told me to add, 'If Miss Luttrell desires to make any purchases, or requires anything in town, she is to have full liberty to obtain it.' He did not mention to what amount, but of course he intended the exercise of a certain discretion."

"I want nothing, sir."

"That is what Mrs. Coles remarked to me: If the young lady only saw the place she was going to, she'd not think of shopping."

Kate made no answer.

"Not but, as Mrs. Coles observed, some good substantial winter clothing—that capital stuff they make now for Lower Canada—would be an excellent thing to take. You are aware, miss, it is a perpetual winter there?"

A short nod, that might mean anything was all her reply.

"And above all, Miss Luttrell," continued he, unabashed by her cold manner—"above all, a few books! Mr. L. from what I hear, has none that would suit a young lady's reading. His studies, it seems, are of an antiquarian order; some say—of course people *will* say so—he dips a little into magic and the black art." Perhaps after all it was the study most appropriate to the place.

"I suppose it is a lonesome spot?" said she, with a faint sigh, and not well heeding what she said.

"Desolate is the name for it—desolate and deserted! I only know it by the map; but I declare to you, I'd not pass a week on it to own the fee simple."

"And yet I am going there of my own free will, sir," said she, with a strangely meaning smile.

"That's exactly what puzzles Mrs. C. and myself," said he, bluntly; "and, indeed, my wife went so far as to say, 'Has the dear young creature nobody to tell her what the place is like? Has she no friend to warn her against the life she is going to?'"

"Tell her from me, sir, that I know it all. I saw it when I was a child, and my memory is a tenacious one. And tell her, too, that bleak and dreary as it is, I look forward to it with a longing desire, as an escape from a world of which, even the very little I have seen, has not enamoured me. And now, sir, enough of me and my fortunes; let us talk of the road. Whenever you are sufficiently rested to begin your journey, you will find me ready."

"You'll stop probably a day in Dublin?"

"Not an hour, sir, if I can get on. Can we leave this to-night?"

"Yes; I have ordered the carriages to take us to the pier at nine, and a cart for your luggage."

"My luggage is there, sir," said she, pointing to the bundle, and smiling at the astonishment his face betrayed; "and when you tell your wife that, sir, she will, perhaps, see I am better fitted for Arran than she suspected."

Albeit the daily life of Mr. Coles gave little scope to the faculty, he was by nature of an inquiring disposition, not to add that he well knew to what a rigid cross-examination he would be subjected on his return to his wife, not merely as to the look, manner, and mien of the young lady, but as to what account she gave of herself, where she came from, and more important still, why she came.

It was his fancy, too, to imagine that he was especially adroit in extracting confidences; a belief, be it observed, very generally held by people whose palpable and pushing curiosity invariably revolts a stranger, and disposes him to extreme reserve.

As they walked the deck of the steamer together, then, with a calm sea and a stilly night, he deemed the moment favourable to open his investigations.

"Ah, yes!" said he, as though addressing some interlocutor within his own bosom—"ah, yes! she will indeed feel it a terrible contrast. None of the pleasures, none of the habits of her former life; none of the joys of the family, and none of the endearments of a home!"

"Of whom, were you speaking, sir?" asked she, with a faint smile.

"Dear me! dear me! what a man I am! That's a habit my wife has being trying to break me of these fifteen years, Miss Luttrell; as she says: 'Coles, take care that you never commit a murder, or you're sure to tell it to the first person you meet.' And so is it when anything occurs to engage my deepest interest—my strongest sympathy; it's no use; do what I will, out it will come in spite of me."

"And I, sir," said she, with a slow and measured utterance, "am exactly the reverse. I no more think of speaking my thoughts aloud, than I should dream of imparting my family secrets, if I had any, to the first stranger whose impertinent curiosity might dispose him to penetrate them."

"Indeed!" cried he, reddening with shame.

"Quite true, I assure you, sir; and now I will wish you a good-night, for it grows chilly here."

CHAPTER XLV.

ON ARRAN.

Kate was awoke from a deep sleep by the noise of the boat coming to anchor. She started up, and looked around her, unable for several seconds to recall where she was. Behind the little land-locked bay the tall mountains rose, wild and fanciful on every side; the dark sky studded with stars above, and the still darker sea beneath, still and waveless; and then the shore, where lights moved rapidly hither and thither; making up a picture strangely interesting to one to whom that lone rock was to be a home, that dreary spot in the wild ocean her whole world.

There were a great many people on the shore awaiting her, partly out of curiosity, in part out of respect, and Molly Ryan had come down to say that his honour was not well enough to meet her, but he hoped in the morning he would be able. "You're to be the same as himself here, he says; and every word you say is to be minded as if it was his own."

"I almost think I remember you; your face, and your voice too, seem to me as though I knew them before."

"So you may, miss. You saw me here at the mistress's wake, but don't let on to the master, for he doesn't like that any of us should think you was ever here afore. This is the path here, miss; it's a rough bit for your tender feet."

"Have we much farther to go, Molly? I am rather tired to day."

"No, miss; a few minutes more will bring us to the Abbey; but sure we'd send for a chair and carry you——"

"No, no; on no account. It is only to-night I feel fatigued. My uncle's illness is nothing serious, I hope?"

"'Tis more grief than sickness, miss. It's sorrow is killin' him. Any one that saw him last year wouldn't know him now; his hair is white as snow, and his voice is weak as a child's. Here we are now—here's the gate. It isn't much of a garden, nobody minds it; and yonder, where you see the light, that's his honour's room, beside the big tower there, and you are to have the two rooms that my mistress lived in." And, still speaking, she led the way through a low, arched passage into a small clean-looking chamber, within which lay another with a neatly-arranged bed, and a few attempts at comfortable furniture. "We did our best, miss, Sam and myself," said Molly; "but we hadn't much time, for we only knew you was coming on Tuesday night."

"It is all very nice and clean, Molly. Your name is Molly, isn't it?"

"Yes, miss," said she, curtesying, and deeply gratified.

"I want nothing better!" said Kate, as she sat down on the bed, and took off her bonnet.

"If you don't need me now, miss, I'll go and bring you your tea; it's all ready in the kitchen."

"Very well, Molly; leave it for me in the outer room, and I'll take it when I am inclined."

Molly saw that she desired to be alone, and withdrew without a word; and Kate, now free of all restraint, buried her face in the pillow and wept bitterly. Never, till the very spot was before her—till the dark shadows of the rugged rocks crossed her path, and the wild solitude of the dreary island appealed to her, by the poor appearance of the people, their savage looks, and their destitution—never till then had she fully realized to her mind all the force of the step she had taken. "What have I done? What have I done?" sobbed she, hysterically, over and over. "Why have I left all that makes life an ecstasy to come and drag out an existence of misery and gloom? Is this the fruit of all my ambition? Is this the prize for which I have left myself without one affection or one sentiment, sacrificing all to that station I had set before me as a goal? I'll not bear it. I'll not endure it. Time enough to come here when my hopes are bankrupt, and my fortune shipwrecked. I have youth—and better, I have beauty. Shall I stay here till a blight has fallen on both? Why, the very misery I came from as a child was less dreary and desolate than this! There was at least companionship there! There was sympathy, for there was fellow-suffering. But here! what is there here, but a tomb in which life is to waste out, and the creature feel himself the corpse before he dies?" She started up and looked around her, turning her eyes from one object to the other in the room. "And it is for this splendour, for all this costly magnificence, I am to surrender the love of those humble people, who, after all, loved me for myself! It was of *me* they thought, for me they prayed, for my success they implored the saints; and it is for this"—and she gazed contemptuously on the lowly decorations of the chamber—"I am to give them up for ever, and refuse even to see them! The proud old Sir Within never proposed so hard a bargain! He did not dare to tell me I should deny my own. To be sure," cried she, with a scornful laugh, "I was forgetting a material part of the price. I am a Luttrell—Kate Luttrell of Arran—and I shall be one day, perhaps, mistress of this grand ancestral seat, the Abbey of St. Finbar! Would that I could share the grandeur with them at once, and lie down there in that old aisle, as dreamless as my noble kinsfolk!"

In alternate bursts of sorrow over the past, and scornful ridicule of the present, she passed the greater part of the night; and at last, exhausted and weary with the conflict, she leaned her head on the side of her bed, and, kneeling as she was, fell off to sleep. When she awoke, it was bright day, the sea-breeze playing softly through a honeysuckle that covered the open window, filled the room with a pleasant perfume, and cooled her heated brow. She looked out on the scarcely ruffled bay, and saw the fishing-boats standing out to sea, while on the shore all were busy launching or stowing away tackle; the very children aiding where they could, carrying down baskets, or such small gear as their strength could master. It was life, and movement, and cheerfulness too—for so the voices sounded in the thin morning air—not a tone of complaint, not one utterance that indicated discontent, and the very cheer which accompanied the sliding craft as she rushed down to the sea seemed to come from hearts that were above repining. The scene was better to her than all her self-arguings. There they were, the very class she sprang from; the men and women like her own nearest kindred; the very children recalling the days when she played barefooted on the beach, and chased the retiring waves back into the sea. They were there, toiling ever on, no hope of any day of better fortune, no thought of any other rest than the last long sleep of all, and why should *she* complain? That late life of luxury and splendour was not without its drawbacks. The incessant watchfulness it exacted, lest in some unguarded moment she should forget the part she was playing—and part it was—the ever-present need of that insidious flattery by which she maintained her influence over Sir Within, and, above all, the dread of her humble origin being discovered, and becoming the table-talk of the servants'-hall. These were a heavy price to pay for a life of luxurious indulgence.

"Here, at least," cried she, "I shall be real. I am the niece and the adopted daughter of the lord of the soil; none can gainsay or deny me; a Luttrell of Arran, I can assert myself against the world; poverty is only an infliction when side by side with affluence; we are the great and the rich here. Let me only forget the past, and this life can be enjoyable enough. I used to fancy, long ago, as I walked the garden alone at Dinasllyn, that no condition of life would every find me unprepared to meet it. Here is a case to prove my theory; and now to be an Arran islander."

As she said this, she began to arrange her room, and place the different articles in it more to her own taste. Her care was to make her little chamber as comfortable as she could. She was rather an adept in this sort of achievement—at least she thought she could impart to a room a character distinctly her own, giving it its *cachet* of homeliness, or comfort, or elegance, or simplicity, as she wished it. The noise of her preparations brought Molly to her aid, and she despatched the amazed countrywoman to bring her an armful of the purple heath that covered the mountain near, and as many wild flowers as she could find.

"To-morrow, Molly," said she, "I will go in search of them myself, but to-day I must put things to rights here. Now, Molly," said she, as they both were busied in filling two large jugs with the best flowers they could find, "remember that I'm an old maid."

"Lawk, miss, indeed you arn't!"

"Well, never mind, I mean to be just as particular, just as severe as one; and remember, that wherever I put a table, a chest of drawers, or even a cup with a flower in it, you must never displace it. No matter how careless I may seem, leave everything here as you find it."

"That's the master's own way, miss; his honour would go mad if I touched a book he was readin'."

It was a very pleasant flattery that the poor woman thus unconsciously insinuated, nor could anything have been more in time, for Kate was longing to identify herself with the Luttrells, to be one of them in their ways, and their very prejudices.

Scarcely had Molly left the room than a light tap came to the door, and a weak voice asked,—

"May I come in?"

Kate hastened to open it, but she was anticipated, and her uncle slowly entered, and stood before her.

"My dear, dear uncle," cried she, taking his hand, and pressing it to her lips.

He pressed her in his arms, and kissed her forehead twice, and then, with a hand on either shoulder, held her for a moment at arms' length, while he looked at her. Hers was not a nature to flinch under such a scrutiny, and yet she blushed at last under the steadiness of his gaze.

"Let us sit down," said he, at length: and he handed her to a seat with much courtesy. "Had I seen you, Miss Luttrell——"

"Oh, sir, say Kate—call me Kate," cried she, eagerly.

"Had I seen you before, Kate," continued he—and there was a touch of feeling as he spoke the name—"I do not think I could have dared to ask you to come here!"

"Oh, dear uncle! have I so disappointed you?"

"You have amazed me, Kate. I was not prepared to see you as you are. I speak not of your beauty, my child; I was prepared for that. It is your air, your bearing, that look, that reminds me of long, long ago. It is years since I saw a lady, my dear Kate, and the sight of you has brought up memories I had believed were dead and buried."

"Then I do not displease you, uncle?"

"I am angry with myself, child. I should never have brought you to this barbarism."

"You have given me a home, sir," said she, fondly; but he only sighed, and she went on—"a home and a name!"

"A name! Yes," said he, proudly; "a name that well befits you, but a home—how unworthy of you! What ignorance in me not to know that you would be like this!" And again he gazed at her with intense admiration. "But see, my child, to what this life of grovelling monotony conduces. Because I had not seen you and heard your voice, I could not picture to my poor besotted mind that, besides beauty, you should have that gracefulness the world deems higher than even beauty. Nay, Kate, I am no flatterer; and, moreover, I will not speak of this again."

"I will try to make you satisfied that you did well to send for me, sir," said she, meekly; and her heart felt almost bursting with delight at the words of praise she had just heard.

"How did you induce them to part with you?" asked he, calmly.

"I gave no choice in the matter, sir. I showed your letter to Sir Within Wardle, and he would not hear of my leaving. I tried to discuss the matter, and he only grew impatient. I hinted at what your letter had vaguely insinuated—a certain awkwardness in my position—and this made him downright angry. We parted, and I went to my room. Once alone, I took counsel with myself. The result was, that I wrote that letter which you received; and I came away the same morning I wrote it."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir, alone."

"And without a leave-taking?"

"Even so, sir. It was the only way in which I could have come, and I had made up my mind to it."

"There was something of the Luttrell there!" said he, turning his eyes full upon her features, which now had caught an expression of calm and resolute meaning. "You well become the name, Kate!"

"It shall be my endeavour, sir."

"And yet," added he, after a pause, "you were very happy there. Tell me the sort of life you used to lead."

"One day will serve for all, uncle; they were exactly alike. My mornings were all my own. If my masters came, I studied, or I dismissed them as I pleased; if I felt indisposed to read, I sung; if I did not like music, I drew; if I did not care for drawing landscape, I caricatured my master, and made a doggrel poem on his indignation. In a word, I trifled over the day till luncheon. After that I rode in the woods, alone if I could, sometimes with Sir Within; often I had time to do both. Then came dressing—a long affair—for I was expected to be fine enough for company each day, though we saw no one. After that, most wearisome of all the day, came dinner—two hours and a half—services of which we never ate; wines we did not care to drink, but all repeated regularly; a solemn mock banquet, my guardian—so I called him—loved immensely, and would have prolonged, if he but knew how, till midnight. Evening brought our one guest, a French abbé, with whom I sung or played chess till I could engage Sir Within and himself in a discussion about Mirabeau or St. Just, when I would slip away and be free. Then, if the night were moonlit, I would drive out in the park, or have a row on the lake; if dark, I would have the conservatory lighted, set the fountains a-playing, and drive the gardener distracted by 'awakening' all his drowsy plants. In a word, I could do what I pleased, and I pleased to do whatever struck me at the moment. I ordered all that I liked from town—books, dress, objects of art, prints—and was just as weary of them all before I saw them as after they had palled upon me. It was a life of intense indulgence, and I'm not sure if one could but fight off occasional ennui, that it wasn't the happiest thing could be made of existence, for it was very dreamy withal, very full of innumerable futures, all rose-coloured, all beautiful."

"And what are you to make of this?" asked Luttrell, almost sternly, as he moved his arm around to indicate the new realm about her. "Here there is no luxury, no wealth, none of the refinement that comes of wealth, not one of the resources that fill the time of cultivated leisure; all is hardship, privation, self-denial. Go abroad, too, beyond the walls of this poor old ruin, and it will be to witness misery and destitution greater still."

"I am going to try if I shall not like the real conflict better than the mock combat," said she, calmly.

"What a change will be your life here, my poor child—what a change! Let it not, however, be worse than it need be. So far as this poor place will permit, be your own mistress—live in your own fashion—keep your own hours—come to me only when you like, never from any sense of duty. I am too inured to solitude to want companionship, though I can be grateful when it is offered me. I have a few books—some of them may interest you; my pursuits, too—what once were my pursuits!" said he, with a sigh, "might amuse you. At all events," added he, rising, "try—try, if you can bear it; it need not be your prison if you cannot."

He again kissed her forehead, and, motioning a good-bye with his hand, moved slowly away.

"Perhaps I shall acquit myself better than he thinks," said she to herself. "Perhaps—who knows if I may not find some place or thing to interest me here? It is very grand 'savagery,' and if one wanted to test their powers of defying the world in every shape, this is the spot. What is this you have brought me to eat, Molly?"

"It's a bit of fried skate, miss, and I'm sorry it's no better, but the potatoes is beautiful."

"Then let me have them, and some milk. No milk—is that so?"

"There's only one cow, miss, on the island, and she's only milked in the evening; but St. Finbar's Well is the finest water ever was tasted."

"To your good health, then, and St. Finbar's!" said she, lifting a goblet to her lips. "You are right, Molly; it is ice-cold and delicious!" And now, as she began her meal, she went on inquiring which of the men about the place would be most likely as a gardener, what things could be got to grow, on which side came the worst winds, and where any shelter could be found. "Perhaps I shall have to take to fishing, Molly," said she, laughing, "for something I must do."

"You could make the nets, anyhow, miss," said Molly, in admiration of the white and graceful hands, and thinking what ought to be their most congenial labour.

"I can row a boat well, Molly," said Kate, proudly.

"Whatever you'd do, you'd do it well, God bless you!" cried the other; for in that hearty delight in beauty, so natural to the Irish peasant nature, she imagined her to be perfection, and the honest creature turned, ere she left the room, to give her a look of admiration little short of rapture.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE STRANGER AT THE WELL.

BEFORE a couple of weeks passed over, Kate had contrived to divide her days so regularly, to establish for herself a certain routine of little duties, that the time slipped by—as time ever will do in monotony—unfelt. The season was the autumn, and the wild hills and mountains were gorgeous in all the brilliant colours of the ever varied heaths. In the little clefts and valleys, too, where shelter favoured, foxgloves and purple mallows grew with a rare luxuriance, while on every side was met the arbutus, its crimson berries hanging in festoons over rock and crag. The sudden unexpected sight of the sea, penetrating by many a fissure, as it were, between the mountains, gave unceasing interest to the wild landscape, and over the pathless moors that she strayed, not a living thing to be seen, was the sense of being the first wayfarer who had ever trod these wastes.

As Kate wandered whole days alone, over and over again came the doubt across her, which was it—the brilliant past, with all its splendour and luxury, or the solitary present—was the dream? Surely they could not both be real! Was the bygone a fancy built out of some gorgeous fragments of things read, heard, or imagined, or was this—this actual scene around her—a vision that was to move past, and leave her to awake to all her former splendour?

Great as the revulsion was to her former life, it was in nothing greater than in the difference between her uncle's cold, sad, distant manner, for so after the first meeting had it become, and the ever watchful anxiety, the courteous attention to her slightest wish, of Sir Within.

She never ceased canvassing with herself how he had borne her desertion; whether he had sunk under it into a hopeless despondency, or called upon his pride to sustain him above any show of indignation. Reading it as the world must read it, there never was such ingratitude; but then the world could never know the provocation, nor ever know by what personal sacrifice she had avenged the slight passed upon her. "My story," said she, "can never be told; his, he may tell how it suits him."

At moments, a sort of romantic exaltation and a sense of freedom would make her believe that she had done well to exchange the splendid bondage of the past for the untrammelled liberty of the present; and then, at other times, the terrible contrast would so overcome her, that she would sit and cry as if her heart was breaking.

"Would my 'old Gardy' pity or exult over me if he saw me now? What would he, who would not suffer me to tread on an uncarpeted step, say if he saw me alone, and poorly clad, clambering up these rugged cliffs to reach some point, where, for an instant, I may forget myself? Surely he would not triumph over my fall!

"Such a life as this is meant to expiate great crimes. Men are sent to wild and desolate islands in the ocean, to wear out days of hopeless misery, because they have warred against their fellows. But what have I done? whom have I injured? Others had friends to love and to guide them; I had none. The very worst that can be alleged against me is, that I was rash and headstrong—too prone to resent; and what has it cost me!

"My uncle said, indeed, this need not be my prison if I could not endure its privations. But what did that mean—what alternative did he point to? Was it that I was to go lower still, and fall back upon all the wretchedness I sprang from? That, never! The barren glory of calling myself a Luttrell may be a sorry price for forfeited luxury and splendour; but I have it, and I will hold it. I am a Luttrell now, and one day, perhaps, these dreary hills shall own me their mistress."

In some such thoughts as these, crossed and recrossed by regrets and half-shadowed hopes, she was returning one night to the Abbey, when Molly met her. There was such evident anxiety and eagerness in the woman's face, that Kate quickly asked her,—

"What is it? What has happened?"

"Nothing, miss, nothing at all. 'Tis only a man is come. He's down at the Holy Well, and wants to speak to you."

"Who is he? What is he?"

"I never seen him before, miss, but he comes from beyant

The Stranger at the Well.

there"—she motioned towards the mainland of Ireland—"and says that you know him well."

"Have you told my uncle of him?"

"No, miss, for the man said I was to tell no living soul but yourself, and to tell you quick, too, for he was in a hurry, and wanted to get away with the evening's tide, and his boat was more than a mile off."

"Molly Ryan," said the girl, calmly, almost sternly, "you heard the orders that my uncle gave. You heard him tell me that I was not to see, nor speak to, nor hold any intercourse with any of those belonging to my mother's family. Is this man one of them?"

"No, miss. 'Tis what I asked him. 'Tis the very first question I put to him. And he said, 'I'm no more to them than you are, Mrs. Ryan,' says he; 'and what's more,' says he, 'if it's any comfort to you to know it, I don't even come from this part of Ireland; so you may make yourself easy about that,' says he. I was puttin' more questions to him, and he stopped me, and said, 'You're just wasting precious time,' says he, 'and if she comes back and finds it too late'—he meant yourself, miss—'she won't forgive you in a hurry for what you've done, for I can't come here again.'"

."You are sure and certain that he was not one of those I spoke of?"

"I know them all well, miss—barrin' the three that was transported—and he's not any of them I ever saw before."

"But he might exactly be one of those who *was* transported, and certainly if I knew that I'd not see him."

"He swore to me he wasn't, miss; and what's more, he said that what he came about wasn't his own business at all, but concerned *you*. That's his whistle now—he gave one a while ago—and he said, 'When I give three,' says he, 'I'm gone, for I'll not lose the tide, whether she comes or not.'"

"Go back to the house, Molly. I'll go down and speak to him."

"Wouldn't you let me follow you, miss, to be near in case of anything?"

"No, Molly. I'm no coward; and I know, besides, that no man who meant harm to me would ever come over here to attempt it."

"At any rate, he'd never go back again;" said the woman fiercely. "Don't be long, miss, or I'll be uneasy."

Kate now turned aside, and hastened down a little steep path which led to the Holy Well. The well itself was a sort of shrine built over a little spring, and shaded by a clump of dwindled oak-trees—almost the only ones in the island. As Kate drew nigh, she saw a man walking up and down beneath the trees, with the quick short step that implied impatience. It was her gift never to forget a face, and in one glance she recognized one she had not seen for years—O'Rorke of Vinegar Hill.

"I thought you'd never come," cried he, as she descended the steps that led down to the well. "I have been waiting here about an hour!"

He held out his hand to shake hands with her, but she drew back, and crossing her shawl in front of her, showed that she declined this greeting.

"Are you too proud to shake hands with me?" asked he, insolently.

"Whatever you have to say to me can be said just as well without."

"What if I wouldn't say it, then, Kitty O'Hara? What if I was to go back the way I came, and leave you to rue the day you insulted me? Do you know, young woman, that it wasn't on my own account I came here—that it was to serve others?"

"They chose a bad messenger if they thought you'd be a welcome one."

"May I never see glory if I'm not tempted to turn away and leave you without telling one word I came for. Where's John Luttrell? for I think I'll tell it to himself."

"My uncle is at the Abbey, if you want him."

"Your uncle!" said he, jeeringly. "Why wasn't he your uncle when you were up at Cush-ma-Creena, without a shoe to your foot, or enough rags to cover you well? You were bare up to this, when I saw you last." And he put his hand to his knee.

"It was a national costume!" said she, with a quiet laugh, "and a patriot like Mr. O'Rorke should not find fault with it."

"Be gorra, it was your own self said that! and it was a lie they tould when they said you were altered!" And almost as if by magic the fellow's ill temper gave way, and he laughed heartily. "Listen to me now, Miss O'Hara, or Miss Luttrell, or whatever you call yourself."

"My name is Luttrell," said she, calmly.

"Well, Luttrell, then; it's the same to me. As I told you already, I came here more on *your* account than my own; and here's what brought me. You know that lodge, or cottage, or whatever they call it, that Vyner built up here in the glen? Well, there's creditors of his now wanting to get possession of it."

"Creditors of Sir Gervais Vyner? Impossible!"

"Possible, or impossible, it's true, that I can vouch for, for I saw the bailiffs that came down with the notices. At any rate, your old grandfather thought that after Vyner himself *he* had the best right to the house and the bit of land, for Vyner told him one day that he'd settle it on you for a marriage portion, and there was others by when he said it; so your grandfather went up and told Tom Crowe, the attorney, how it was, and Tom said, ' Keep it open, Malone,' says he—' keep it open till we see what's to be done in it. Don't let the other creditors get a hold of the place till I get an opinion for you.' And on that, old Peter goes back and gets a few boys together, and they go down to the glen just in time to see the sub-sheriff, Barty Lambert, riding up the lawn, with six or eight men after him. The minute Lambert saw your grandfather, he cried out, ' Here's Peter, " the Smasher;" save yourselves, boys!' And he rode his horse at a wall, jumped it, and made off as hard as he could. Two of the others followed, but the rest stood their ground. Old Peter then stepped out, and ordered them to lay down their arms, and give up the writ, and whatever papers they had. Some were for this, and some against; and Peter, wanting to finish the business at once, stepped up to Joe Maher, the sub-sheriff's man, and said: ' Joe,' says he, ' I made you ate a process once before, wax and all, and maybe I'd have to do the same now. Give it up this minute, or——' Just then Maher drew out a pistol, but before he could level it, old Peter was in on him, and they grappled each other, and a terrible struggle it was, for the others never interfered, but left them to fight it out fair! At last the pistol went off, and the ball passed through old Peter's cheek; but if it did, it didn't prevent him getting over Joe's breast as he fell, and beating his head against the ground, till he rolled over him himself out of weakness and fatigue; and when Peter came to himself—Maher didn't, for he was dead!"

"Dead!" exclaimed she—"murdered!"

"Not a bit murdered, but killed fair! Anyhow, the others ran away, and old Peter, as soon as he was able, made off too, and got into the mountains, and now the police is after him, and a reward of fifty pounds offered for him, as if he was a wild beast. British law and justice, my darling; the beautiful code of laws that was made to civilize Ireland four centuries ago, and hasn't done much to talk about up to this!"

"This is a very dreadful story," said she, after some time of silence. "And what is to become of this poor old man?"

"That depends on you, Miss Kate—Luttrell," added he, after a brief struggle with himself.

"On *me?* How can it depend upon *me?*"

"Here's how it is, then. If they catch Peter, what between the character he has already, and what's known of his sons, they'll make short work of it. He'll 'swing, as sure as you are there this minute. So there's nothing for it but to get him away to America by any of the ships coming round from the north, and it would be easy enough for him to get on board; but what's not so easy, Miss Kate, is to pay his passage. He hasn't one shilling in the world. The boys got together last night, and all they could make up was eleven and fourpence; there it is, and a pawn ticket for an old pistol that nobody would give half a crown for——"

"But what can I do?" broke she in, passionately. "What can I do?"

"Help him with a few pounds. Give it or lend it; but let him have enough to make his escape, and not go to the 'drop' for want of a little help."

"There's not one belonging to him poorer than me," began she. "Why do you shake your head? Do you disbelieve me?"

"I do; that's just it."'

"Shall I swear it—shall I take my oath to you, that except the trifle that remains to me of what I had to pay my journey here, I have not one farthing in the world?"

"Then what's the fine story of the great castle where you were living, and the grand clothes and the jewels you used to wear? Do you mean to tell me that you left them all behind, when you came away?"

"It is true. I did so."

"And came off with nothing?"

She nodded, and he stared at her, partly in astonishment, and partly with some show of admiration; for even to his nature this conduct of hers displayed a degree of character that might be capable of great sacrifices.

"And so," said he, after a pause, "you can do nothing for him?"

"What can I do?" asked she, almost imploringly.

"I'll tell you," said he, calmly. "Go up to John Luttrell, and say, 'My grandfather is hiding from the police; they have a warrant out against him, and if he's taken he's sure to be condemned; and we know what mercy a Malone will meet at the assizes of Donegal.' Tell him—it's just the one thing he'll care for—that it wouldn't be pleasant for him to be summoned as a witness to character, and have to declare in open court that he married the prisoner's daughter. Say a ten-pound note, or even five, is a cheap price to pay for escaping all this disgrace and shame; and tell him, besides, when old Peter goes, you've seen the last of the family. He'll think a good deal of that, I promise you——"

"Stop," said she, boldly. "You know nothing of the temper of the man you talk of; but it is enough that I tell you he has got no money. Listen to me, O'Rorke. It was but yesterday he sent off a little ornament his wife used to wear to have it sold, to pay a county rate they were threatening to distrain for——"

"Where did you get all your law?" said he, jeeringly; but, not heeding the gibe, she went on,—

"I would have offered him the few shillings I had, but I was ashamed and afraid."

"How much is it?"

"A little more than two pounds. You shall have it; but remember, I can do no more. I have nothing I could sell—not a ring, nor a brooch—not even a pin."

"It's better than nothing," muttered he, surlily, below his breath. "Let me have it."

"It's up at the Abbey. Wait, and I'll fetch it. I'll not be an instant." And before he could answer she was gone. In less time than seemed possible she was back again, breathless and agitated. "Here it is," said she, placing the money in his hand. "If you should see him, tell him how grieved I am to be of such little service to him, and give him this silk handkerchief; tell him I used to wear it round my neck, and that I sent a kiss to him in it—poor fellow! I almost wish I was with him," muttered she, as she turned away her head, for the hot tears filled her eyes—she felt weak and sick.

"I'm afraid this will do little good," said O'Rorke, looking at the money in his open palm.

"And yet I can do no more!" said she, with deep sorrow.

"Wouldn't you venture to tell your uncle how it is? Sure he might see that the disgrace, if this old man is caught and brought to trial, will spread to himself?"

"I dare not—I will not," said she, firmly.

"Then I suppose the story is true, though old Peter wouldn't believe it, that John Luttrell made you sign a paper never to see nor speak to one of your own again?"

"I signed no paper, sir, nor ever was asked to sign any. What pledges I have given my uncle are not to be discussed with you."

"Well, you don't deny it, that's clear."

"Have you anything more that you wish to say to me?" asked she, controlling every show of temper.

"No—not a word," said he, turning to go away. "Only, if I see old Peter—it's not unlike that I may—he'll be asking me how tall you are, and how you're looking. Will you just come out from under the shade of that tree and let me have a fair look at you?"

Kate took off her bonnet and threw her shawl from her, and stood forward with an air as composed and assured as might be.

"Shall I tell you what I'll say to him?" said O'Rorke, with an impudent half grin on his face.

"You need not, sir. It has no interest whatever for me. Good-bye!" She took up her shawl as she spoke, and walked slowly away.

O'Rorke looked after her; the mocking expression of his features changed to a look of almost hatred, and he muttered some angry words between his teeth. "I read you right, Miss Katty, when you weren't much higher than my knee. I read you right! You may have plenty in love with you, but by my conscience you'll never have Tim O'Rorke."

CHAPTER XLVII.

HOW KATE WAS TASKED.

For several days after this scene, Kate thought of nothing but her old grandfather, whether he still wandered an outcast through the wild mountains of Donegal, or had succeeded in making his escape to America. At moments her anxieties became so intense, from fears lest she herself might prove blamable if his escape could not be effected, that she was almost resolved to go to her uncle and reveal all to him. Luttrell's manner had, however, been unusually cold and reserved for some time back, and she had not courage to take this step. Indeed, whole days would now pass with nothing but a mere greeting between them, and at length, one entire day went over without her seeing him at all. It was said that he was very busy, had received a number of letters by the post, and was engaged a great part of the night in answering them. On the morning that followed this day, Kate was preparing the little basket in which she carried her luncheon with her to the hills, whenever she meditated a longer excursion than usual, when her uncle entered hastily, and with evident signs of agitation in his face.

"I have had disagreeable tidings, Kate," said he, with a forced calm of manner and voice. "I would have kept them from you if I could, but it is not possible. Some weeks ago there was a resistance to the sheriff by a party of country people, led on by that old man—no stranger to such conflicts—Malone. There was a fight, and a man, the sheriff's bailiff, was killed. There was no doubt who killed him. It was Malone. He made his escape, however, into West Donegal, waiting, as it was supposed, till by some ship passing—north about—he could reach America. The police, however, got possession of his plan, secured a revenue-cutter, and, lying in wait, arrested him in the very act of getting on board. Another struggle ensued here, and Malone fought with such desperation, that one of the men is badly wounded, and another drowned, for the small boat was upset in the conflict, and it is said that, had not Malone's arm been broken by a pistol-shot, he might yet have escaped by swimming around the ship, which was in full trim to have made sail when he should get on board. They captured him, however, and he is now in gaol; he will be tried at the next assizes, and of his fate there can be no doubt."

"Condemned?" said she, in a low voice.

"Yes," he continued, "that he must be executed is also clear. The very name he bears is an indictment against him. The fellow, however, is full of the impression that everything he has done was in self-defence; he maintains that he merely resisted a personal attack, and he has the madness, in the face of all the convictions that have befallen his family, to declare that he belongs to a most irreproachable set of people, long known and respected in this neighbourhood, and he has the daring effrontery—here in my hand is the letter that conveys it—to require that I should come forward to vouch for his character and acknowledge the relationship between us. Nor is this all," added he, in a voice husky with passion; "he demands—it is no prayer, no entreaty—he demands from me a sum sufficient to defray the costs of his defence. He asserts that though he himself is ready to take his chance, and, if need be, brave the worst the law can do to him, it might not suit Luttrell of Arran to sit under a two hours' cross-examination, and have his whole life laid bare for the amusement of the world. You cannot, without knowing the man, believe how seriously these threats are uttered; he is the most recklessly daring fellow I ever knew, and I can well conceive what questions he will suggest to his counsel to put to me if I once appear on the table. To-night I am to give my answer. The man he sends over here to receive it is the most offensive messenger he could have found had he searched Europe from one end to the other. He is a fellow named O'Rorke, who once before placed me in a position almost similar to what I am now threatened with, and drove me to seek the shelter of this desolate spot. On that occasion, however, I escaped the indignity of personal exposure, and of that open shame that rise now before me. The demand is precise and clear. Twenty pounds down, fifty on the day before the trial comes on, and my name to a bill for fifty more if the jury bring in a verdict of not guilty. For this he pledges himself—these are his words—'never to be any longer a charge to me nor mine.' I am well aware that the letter I hold here is not his own, for he cannot write, but I can trace through certain expressions—and, above all, certain repetitions—phrases inserted at his instance."

"Am I spoken of, sir? Does he allude to me at all?"

"Never; not once. Indeed, he even says, 'I hope that whatever you decide to do in this business will be your honour's own mind and nobody else's, for I write this in confidence between man and man, and only want Yes or No between us.'"

"And what will you do, sir? Have you come to any resolve?"

"Yes, I have made up my mind as to what is to be done immediately. I have examined my agent's accounts, and I find that by the eighth of next month I shall have to my credit about seventy pounds. The assizes are fixed for the twelfth. I will give an order for half of this sum at once. Cane will pay it, I have no doubt, when he sees my necessity. I will also engage to pay the remainder on the eighth, the day I shall receive it; but on one condition, Kate—only one condition—which is, that no matter what course the defence may take, I am not to be summoned as a witness. No one knows better than Malone himself how valueless would any testimony of mine be to him; he knows, besides, what detriment it would be to him if I should be cross-examined; the man's character will not bear sifting, and he is insane to provoke it. If, however, he should persist—and such is the fellow's nature that it is likely he will—in his own plan, we must leave this."

"Leave this! And for where, sir?"

"How can I tell? I only know that I mean to save myself from this shame at any cost. A few days would carry us over to Holland or to France. In either of these I should be safe. I have written to my agent, and consented to all his conditions as to the sale of a certain small estate I possess in Mayo. We must seek out a new banishment, Kate. You will say it can scarcely be drearier than the old one; but you don't know, you could not know, how sorrow endears a spot, and ties it to the heart of him who lives only to mourn! These rugged cliffs, these pathless moors, these barren hills, and sea-lashed promontories, have been my friends for years—the only friends who have never changed to me. Let me now, however, think only of the present. This man is to be here to-night. It is more than likely he will be able to answer me at once, and declare whether Malone will accept my conditions."

"What think you, uncle, if I were to speak with him? Might it not be possible I could make some terms which you wouldn't have patience to treat about?"

"I thought of that, too, Kate, but the man is one of a class you have not met for many a year. It is not that he is not a gentleman, but he is not a peasant. You cannot appeal to him on the claim of honour, and as little on the plea of generosity. He is a cold, harsh, unfeeling fellow, distrustful and false. How could you deal with such a man?"

"A woman will always deal better with a man like this than a fellow-man, if only from the fact that he will be less on his guard before her, and more disposed to think little of her intelligence. Let me try it, uncle."

"You have half persuaded me; but still, Kate, what terms could you propose that I cannot offer myself?"

"True, sir; but I could press them in a way that your pride might not stoop to, and so let me try."

He paused to consider, and she went on,—

"Yes, dear uncle, trust the whole of this negotiation to me; it will be a task far too painful for you. Let me speak to him. Remember that the links that bind me to the class he belongs to have only been loosened a year or two back. I have a closer view of such men's natures than you could ever have, and in recognizing this he will be franker with me."

"If you really think——"

"I think and I know it, uncle."

"Take this then, Kate," said he, handing her his purse. "It is all the ready money I have. It may help you to deal with him, Kate. I have told you everything. Do the best you can for us." These words he muttered as if to himself, and then turned away and left the room.

Kate spread the money on the table before her, and sat down, supporting her head between her hands, and gazing steadfastly at the pieces. "To think," said she, bitterly—"to think that a few more or a few less of these shall tilt the scale of our fortune, and decide not alone whether we be happy or wretched, but whether we hold a high head in life or stand in a felon's dock! And what scores of them have I not squandered in foolish wastefulness!—sums that any one of them now might rescue this poor old man from a dreadful fate, and set him at liberty. Has not my whole life been just as spendthrift—have I not wasted every gift I possessed, and ended just where I begun?"

"The master sent me," cried Molly, entering, "to say that there's a boat comin' in now, and, maybe, one you know would be aboord of her."

"Very well, Molly. If a stranger should land and ask for his honour or myself, show him in here."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

HOW THE TASK TRIED HER.

KATE dressed herself with more than usual care—simply, indeed, but with a degree of attention to becomingness that was truly remarkable. Twice did she alter the arrangement of her hair, and more than once did she try what coloured ribbon would best suit the style she had chosen. A man might have passed without notice the little details by which she heightened the charms that were natural to her, but a woman would quickly have detected small traits of coquetry in the loose falling curls that fell upon her neck, and the open sleeve that displayed her finely turned arm; nor would the sprig of dark purple heath she wore in her bosom have escaped the critical eye, well knowing how its sombre colouring "brought out" the transparent brilliancy of the fair skin beneath it.

She had but completed her studied but simple toilet, when Molly ushered into the room "The strange man, miss, that wants to see the master."

"And that is only to see the mistress, I'm told," added Mr. O'Rorke, as he seated himself, and laid his hat on the floor beside him. It was then that Kate entered, and as the fellow arose to greet her, his looks of admiring wonder sufficiently told what success had waited on her efforts.

"My uncle is not well enough to see you," said she, as she sat down, "but he has told me everything that he would say, and I have ventured to assure him that, as you and I are somewhat old friends we should soon come to an understanding together; the more as we can have but the same wish in the object before us."

"May I never! but you're grown an elegant woman," cried O'Rorke. "'Tisn't out of flattery I say it, but I don't think there's your equal in Dublin."

"I'm very proud of your approval," said she, with a faint smile, but with the most perfect composure.

"And it's honest—all honest," added he. "It isn't as if you was made up with paint, and false hair, and fine lace, and stiff silk. There you are, as simple as the turnpike man's daughter, and by the harp of old Ireland, I'll back you against any beauty in St. James's this day."

"My dear Mr. O'Rorke, it's not quite fair to turn my head in this fashion. Don't forget that these are the sort things I'm not accustomed to hear in this place."

"By my conscience, then, you'll hear them in many another place before you die. Listen to me now, Miss Luttrell. It's a shame and a scandal to them that could help it that you're not at the court of France this day. I'm talking good sense when I say you'd make a sensation there such as they never knew since that old blackguard Louis the Fourteenth gathered all the beauties in the world round him instead of pictures and statues. More by token, he wasn't wrong; flesh and blood beats white marble and canvas easily."

"I suspect I see what sort of a king Mr. O'Rorke would have been!" said she, archly.

"Liberty, first of all, darling," said he, recalled by the personal appeal to the stock theme of his life; "'tis the birthright of the man as he steps on his native earth; 'tis the first whisper of the human heart, whether in the frozen regions of eternal snow, or the sun-scorched plains of the tropics. 'Tis for sacred liberty our fathers fought for seven centuries, and we'll fight for seven more.

'Erin go Bragh is a nation's cry,
'Tis millions that sing it in chorus,
And to that tune, before we die,
We'll chase the Saxon before us.'

Oh dear! oh dear!" cried he, wiping his brow. "Why did you set me off so? I took an oath on Saturday last that I'd think of nothing but old Peter till the trial was over, and here I am talking of Erin's woes just as if I was at Burgh Quay, and O'Connell in the chair."

"Let us talk of Peter, then. I am longing to hear of him."

"It's a short story. They caught him at sea, in an open boat; he was making for a brig bound for Newfoundland. They caught him, but they had a fight for it, and they got the worst of it, too. Old Peter wasn't a man to be taken with his arms crossed. But it was all the worse, for Tom Crowe says the last business will go harder with him than the first, and Tom say's what's true. They'd rather hung Peter Malone than any other ten men in the west of Ireland. This is the fifth time they've had him in the dock; but to be sure he had a fine bar the last trial. He had Daniel O'Connell and Dick Sheil."

"And who will defend him now?" asked she, eagerly.

"That's what your uncle Luttrell must answer, Miss Kate; he is the only one who can reply to that question."

"Listen to me now attentively, and I will explain to you my uncle's position; a very few words will suffice, and you are not a man to require more than are necessary. He has by great effort and at heavy sacrifice got a small sum of money——"

"What do you call a small sum?" broke he in. "Is it a hundred?"

"No; not fifty!"

A long whistle was O'Rorke's reply, as he arose and took up his hat.

"You had better hear me out," said she, calmly. "This sum I have here—it is thirty-five pounds; he empowers me to place it in your hands to-day, with the promise of as much more the day before the assizes open."

"And why not at once? Why not now?"

"You shall hear. He desires and demands, in return for this aid, that he be not summoned as a witness on the trial. To call him would be a needless exposure—a mere valueless cruelty."

"It would not," cried the other, fiercely. "It's not at this time of day any one has to know the effect of putting a gentleman in the witness-box, when it is a poor labouring man is in the dock. Let John Luttrell come into court, and after sitting beside the Chief Baron on the Bench, get up on the table and take his oath that he has known Peter Malone, the prisoner, for more than twenty years, as a hard-working, quiet, decent man, trying to bring up his family respectably, and, indeed, with such a desire to better their condition in life, that he, John Luttrell of Arran, was not ashamed to make one of that same Peter Malone's daughters his wife, so well brought up, so well educated were they——"

"Stop! this cannot be. I tell you it is impossible."

"And why is it impossible? It is true what I am saying? Was Peter Malone's daughter John Hamilton Luttrell's wife or not? There's the whole question. And what sort of a man or gentleman is he that is ashamed to own his wife!"

"Do not speak so loud; and now listen to me. My uncle, for his own good reasons, will not face the exposure of a public trial and the insolence of the Crown lawyers, who would not hesitate to rake up long-buried accusations against him, and revive sorrows which even in their decay embitter his life. He will not endure this, and he is right."

"Right to deny a man his chance of life!"

"You know well—none better—how little my uncle's testimony could serve this poor man. His case is too serious for that."

"I won't go over that again," said he, impatiently. "I haven't any time to throw away in arguments. If you put the whole seventy pounds down on the table it wouldn't do! No, it would not. It will take thirty, to begin with, to get Billy Sloane out of the country, and he it is the Crown relies on for the first charge; he saw old Peter strike the bailiff first. M'Nulty is the cheapest of the 'silk gowns,' and he won't come under fifty, and a retainer of ten more. The *Westport Star* wants ten pounds to put in the article threatening the jury, if they don't bring in a verdict of 'Not Guilty,' because, as Mr. Potter says, 'Word it as carefully as you like, it's a contempt of court, and may send me for a year to gaol.' Make money of that, Miss Kitty. Thirty and fifty is eighty, and ten more, ninety, and ten to the newspaper is a hundred; and after that there is the cost to Tom Crowe, and the expenses of the case, not to speak of the daily livin' in the gaol, that's something terrible. There's not a pint of sperits doesn't cost three shillings!"

"But if we have no more?—if we have given every farthing we can raise?"

"'Tis a nice confession for an estated gentleman, for the man that writes himself Luttrell of Arran, that, to save his father, or father-in-law, from the death of a felon, he could only scrape together seventy pounds!"

"You have only to look around you, and see how we are living, to see that it is the truth."

"Many a miser that won't give himself bread passes the night counting over his guineas."

"He is no miser, sir," said she, indignantly, for all her self-control failed her at this point. "If he were not a generous gentleman, he would never have made the proposal I have now told you of."

"Tell the generous gentleman, then, to keep his money, young *lady*," and he laid a sarcastic emphasis on the word. "Tell him I'll not touch a shilling of it. And I'll tell you more that you may tell him; say that he'll want it all, to buy himself a new suit of clothes to make a decent appearance when he's summoned to come forward at the trial."

"You'd no more dare to utter this insolence to his face, than you'd brave the anger of his people here when they heard he was insulted; and take my word for it, Tim O'Rorke, I'm only hesitating this moment whether I'll not tell them."

As she spoke, she flung wide the window, and looked out upon the shore beneath, where some thirty wild islanders were listlessly lounging and waiting for the tide to ebb.

O'Rorke grew lividly pale at a threat so significant. If there was anything that had a greater terror for him than another, it was a popular vengeance.

"Well, sir, do you like the prospect from this window?" asked she. "Come here, and tell me if it is not interesting."

"It's wild enough, if you mean that," said he, with a forced effort to seem calm.

"Tim O'Rorke," said she, laying her hand on his arm, and looking at him with an expression of kindly meaning, "it is not in their trouble that friends should fall out. I know what affection you have for my poor old grandfather——"

"So, then, you own him?" cried he, scoffingly.

"When did I disown him?"

"Maybe not; but it's the first time since I entered this room that you called him by that name."

She flushed up; but after a moment, repressing her anger, she said,—

"Let us think only of him whose life is in peril. What do you advise?—what do you wish?"

"I have no more to say, Miss Kate. *I* have told you what the defence will cost, I have told you that we have nobody to look to but yourselves, and *you* have just told me that it's a broken reed we're leaning on, and now I don't think there's much more to be said by either of us."

She leaned her forehead against the wall and seemed deeply lost in thought.

"I mustn't lose the tide, any way," said he, taking up his hat and stick, and laying them on the table. "I may as well put old Peter out of pain, for anxiety is the greatest of all pain, and tell him that John Luttrell won't help him."

"Not will not—say that he cannot help him!"

"'Tis little difference it makes whether it's the will or the way is wanting when a drowning man cries out, and nobody gives him a hand. And yet," added he, "it will be hard to persuade old Peter that his daughter's husband could be so cold-hearted. I'm thinking you ought to write a line or two with your own hand, and saying that it was no fault of mine that I didn't bring better news back with me."

She made him no answer, and, after a pause, he went on,—

"There's his money, miss—give it back to him; much good may it do him. He has the comfort of thinking, that if he didn't get a fortune with his wife, her relations never cost him much either." He moved away towards the door. "Good-bye, Miss Kate. Tell your uncle that Peter's case is the third on the list, and he'll be time enough if he leaves home on the 9th—that will be Tuesday week.

She turned hastily round, and overtook him as he laid his hand on the lock of the door.

"One word—only one word more, O'Rorke!" cried she, impassionedly. "I have told you faithfully what my uncle charged me with. I swear to you, before Heaven, I do not know of any help he can offer except this. Now if there is any way that you can think of to serve this poor old man, say so, and I swear to you again, if it depends on me, I'll do it!"

"Would it be too late to write to Vyner?" asked he, half doggedly.

"Utterly. He is in Italy. Besides, my uncle tells me he is in some great trouble himself about money."

"What of that other—I forget his name—where you were living last?"

"Sir Within Wardle? Impossible!—impossible!"

"And why?"

"I cannot tell you. But I may say this, that I'd rather beg in the street than I'd stoop to ask him."

"Isn't he rich?"

"Immensely rich."

"And he is generous and free of his money, you always said?"

"I never heard of one more so."

"There's the two things we want—money, and the man that will give it. Sit down there, and write these lines to him: 'My grandfather is to be tried this assizes on a charge of wilful murder. I have no money to pay for his defence. Will you help me?'"

"Oh, no, no! I could not!—I could not!" cried she, covering her face with both her hands.

"Why, it's only this minute you were ready to swear to me that you'd do anything in the world to save him, and now that I've hit on this, you cry out, 'No—no!' as if I was proposing something to shame and disgrace you."

"Shame and disgrace, indeed!" burst she out, as a sickly colour came over her, and she looked like one recovering after a fainting-fit.

"Well, I'm no judge of these things," muttered he, "but I'd like to know what it is that would be harder to feel than the sight of an old man of eighty-two going to the gallows!"

She gave a sharp cry, and held her head with both hands, as if some sudden sharp pang shot through her.

"Do not—do not, Tim O'Rorke! I can't bear it!" she screamed out, in a voice of wild, harsh meaning.

"I'll never ask you again," said he, slowly; "but maybe the day will come when you'll be sorry that I did not! Good-bye."

She made no answer, but sat with her face hid in her hands, and turned towards the wall.

"Good-bye, Miss Kate," repeated he once more; and opening the door slowly, he went out, and closed it after him.

She never stirred nor raised her head, till, by a rustling sound of the branches at the window, she was startled and looked up. It was O'Rorke, who was leaning on the sill of the window, and looking in.

"Would you give me a scrap of something you were wearing—a bit of ribbon, or the like, I know you are not fond of cutting off your hair—to give the old man? He'd rather have it than a crown jewel——"

"Take this!" cried she, snatching up a scissors, and cutting off the long and silky lock that fell in a curl upon her neck; and turning to the table, she folded it neatly in a piece of paper. She took up her pen, too, but the thought that he could not read deterred her; for what she would have written she could not bear that other eyes than his own should trace, and she sat thinking for some minutes, when suddenly, through what train of thought impelled it is not easy to say, she cried out, "Yes, I will do it! Come back—wait a moment—or, better still, leave me to myself an instant, and I shall be ready."

He left the window, and she sat down at the table. Without a moment's hesitation or reflection she wrote thus:—

"St. Finbar's, Arran.

"SIR,—I make no attempt to deprecate your anger, or palliate the wrong I have done you. My offence is one that only a free pardon could cover, and I do not dare to entreat for this. It is for something more, and less than forgiveness, I have now to ask you.

"My grandfather, a man of eighty, is in gaol, about to be tried on a charge of felony; he declares his innocence, but having no means to pay counsel, despairs of establishing the fact. My uncle cannot help him; will you?

"When I think of the time that I had not to speak a wish till I saw it gratified, I sicken over the ingratitude which drives me to approach you as a suppliant, while I promise never again to address you.

"The bearer of the present note will take charge of your answer, should you deign to reply to your unhappy, because unworthy,

"KATE LUTTRELL."

"Are you ready with the letter?" asked O'Rorke, as he leaned his arms on the window-sill and looked into the room.

"Yes," said she, folding and addressing it. "You will set out immediately, and deliver this into the hands of Sir Within Wardle, at Dalradern Castle. It is about fourteen miles from Wrexham. Mind! into his own hands, for I am not sure how or by whom he may now be surrounded. As little can I guess what sort of a reply he may give; he may reject my entreaty; he may even refuse to answer it. He would have every right to do either. Let it be your care to note him closely as he reads my letter, and mark what effect it produces. I shall question you, when you come back, on the minutest details of your meeting—of all that he says, of his manner, of his looks; whether he speaks of me, and how. You know well—few better—how to acquit yourself in such a scene, and be sure that you address your sharpest wits to it. If he be ill and cannot write, tell him that he may trust you with a verbal answer. *I* have not said so in my note, but *you* may, and he will believe you; he reads men quickly, and he will see that you are in my confidence. If he asks you about me and my life here, answer freely whatever your own judgment prompts; he may question you about the place I live in; tell him what it is like."

"Don't give me any more directions, if you don't want me to forget some of them; only tell me one thing. If he asks me as to what amount might be required for the defence, am I to say the highest figure or the lowest?"

"You are to adhere to the strict truth, O'Rorke, and for this reason, if for no other, that you will be in the presence of a man well accustomed to deal with craftier men than yourself, and that all your attempts at deception would go for nothing."

"And if he says, 'Why don't Mr. Luttrell come forward to help one of his own near relations?'"

"He will not ask this."

"And why wouldn't he?"

"Because he is a gentleman, sir."

"Oh, that's the reason," said O'Rorke, sneeringly. "Well, I think by this time I know as much about him as I am likely to do till I see him, so I'll be going."

"Have you any money for this journey?"

"Of course I haven't. I suppose I'll need five pounds to come and go."

"Take ten," said she, pushing the notes towards him. "I will try and settle matters with my uncle later."

"By St. Peter! you ought to have been born a lady with a fine estate," cried he, rapturously. "You have a grand way of doing things, anyhow!"

She smiled at the flattery; it was not at all displeasing to her, and she held out her hand at him as she said "Good-bye."

"You'll see me here by Saturday next, if I'm alive."

"May it be with good news," said she, waving a good-bye. "My love to old grandfather." Scarcely was the last word uttered, when Luttrell opened the door stealthily, and peeped in.

"How long this interview has lasted, Kate," said he; "what have you done?"

"You must wait till next Saturday, uncle, for my answer, and I hope it will content you."

"Why not tell me now?"

"Because I could not tell you enough, sir."

"I am not wont to be treated as a child whose fortunes are to be in the keeping of others!" said he, sternly. "When Saturday comes, it may be to hear that which I cannot approve of—which I will not accept."

"Yes, sir, you will," said she, calmly. "You charged me to do my best, and when I shall have done so you will not discredit me."

CHAPTER XLIX.

MR. O'RORKE ABROAD.

ALBEIT Mr. O'Rorke had no partiality for the Saxon, he did not dislike his English tour. It was an occasion for much enjoyment in the present, with a prospect of considerable expatiation over in the future. He travelled—and it is a mode which occasionally enhances the enjoyment of travel—at another's expense; and he indulged in many little luxuries not known to his daily life.

It was toward the close of a glorious day, mellow in all the richness of autumn, that he first caught sight of the great massive towers and battlemented walls of Dalradern Castle. The setting sun had just fallen on the windows, and the vast frontage was illuminated with a golden glory that relieved the stern severity of the heavy masonry, and gave warmth and colour to its cold and stately feudalism.

"And she left this for that rock—that miserable rock in the ocean," cried he. "What could possess her to do it? She was no fool, that was clear enough. It was no fool could have made herself what she was; and what else but folly could make any one exchange that princely place for the wild and dreary desolation of Arran? There's more in this than one sees on the surface," thought O'Rorke. "It's not in human nature to believe that she did not enjoy the grand life such a house must supply—the very aspect of it suggested everything that wealth could compass, and it could not be that she did not attach herself to its enjoyments. No; there must have been a reason, or something that she thought was a reason, for it. Ay, and that same reason, whatever it was, must have been the source of her great unwillingness to address Sir Within. She left him in anger, that's plain enough; and about what could it be? Had she wearied him? Had her temper, or her caprice, or her extravagance, tired out his patience? Was it that the self-indulgence of the spoiled child had at last revolted the very spirit that had spoiled her? or was it"—and, to O'Rorke's thinking, this seemed not improbable—"Sir Within had made her some proposals, not merely offensive to her dignity, but an outrage to her ambition? If I know you, Miss Katty," said he, aloud, "you never lived in that grand house without dreaming of the time you'd be the mistress of it. And what made you give up the game? That's what I'd like to know, and it's what I'll try to find out before I leave this."

As he drew near the castle, the stately grandeur of the place impressed him still more. Never had he seen such magnificent timber—never before had he witnessed that marvellous order and propriety which give even to a vast park all the elegance of a garden. The clumps of flowery shrubs, in spots that few would probably ever visit—rare trees in out-of-the-way places—seemed to show what immense resources existed where so much that was valuable could be squandered uncared for.

One of the keepers, by whom he was accompanied from the gate-lodge, discoursed to him freely as they went along, telling of the hundreds of acres enclosed within the demesne, the extensive gardens and pleasure-grounds, to keep which in order required quite a regiment of labourers, "and all," as the man added, "for an old man that sits all day at a window, and only comes out of an evening to take the air on a terrace. Never sees any one, nor goes anywhere; and won't even dine with his young relation, Mr. Ladarelle, who is down here for the shooting."

O'Rorke skirmished, cautiously, of course, to ascertain whether the man could tell him anything of Kate, but he found that he had only lately entered the service, and never heard of her. He had heard, however, that Sir Within was greatly changed of late; some heavy blow, of what sort he knew not, had befallen him, and he now neither rode out nor drove, did not care to enter the garden, and, in fact, seemed weary of his life, and indifferent to everything.

"There he is now on the terrace, taking his evening walk. I mustn't go any farther with you; but when you pass the two large oaks yonder, you'll see the great entrance, ring the bell, and some one will come to you."

O'Rorke went on his way, but had not gone far when he was overtaken by a servant in livery, who, bare-headed and almost breathless from running, demanded angrily "What he was doing there?"

"I have a letter for your master that I wish to deliver at once," replied he, firmly.

"Give it here, and wait for your answer round there, by the stables."

"No such thing, my smart fellow; I am to deliver my letter into your master's hand, and I will give it to no other."

"You're more likely, then, to take it back with you," said the other, jeeringly, and turned away.

"Tell your master that my letter comes from Ireland," cried O'Rorke after him, "and that it is one won't brook delay." But whether the fellow heard him or not he could not say.

In less time, however, than he believed it possible for the man to have given his message, came a demure-looking man in black from the castle, who beckoned him to come forward.

"Are you the bearer of a letter from Ireland?" asked he.

"Yes. It is to be given to Sir Within Wardle's own hand."

"Come along with me, then."

O'Rorke was too much excited by the thought of the presence he was about to stand in, to note more than generally the spacious hall and the immense marble stairs that led from it. The lofty corridor, whose windows of stained glass threw a rose-coloured glow over walls and pavement, together with the rich perfume of flowers, made his head feel confused and addled.

As the servant ushered him on the terrace, he whispered, "Go forward," and then retired. O'Rorke advanced to where Sir Within was now seated, one arm leaning on the table beside him.

"You said you came from Ireland," asked he, in a weak voice; "is it from Arran?"

"It is, sir."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered he to himself. "Give me your letter. Go down yonder"—and he pointed to the extreme end of the terrace—"I shall call you when I want you."

When O'Rorke reached the end of the terrace, he turned a cautious, furtive look towards the old man, who still sat with the unopened letter in his hand, and did not move. At last he broke the seal, but such seemed the agitation of his feelings that he could scarcely read it, for he twice laid it on the table and hid his face between his hands. Suddenly he looked up and beckoned O'Rorke towards him, and said,—

"Tell me, my good man, do you know the contents of this leter?"

"I know what it is about, sir."

"Were you with her when she wrote it?"

"I was."

"Was it of her own will—at the suggestion of her own thoughts? I mean, did she write this willingly, and without a struggle?"

"That she didn't! She wrote it just because that without it her old grandfather wouldn't have even a chance for his life! She wrote it, crying bitterly all the time, and sobbing as if her heart was breaking."

The old man turned away his head, but with his hand motioned to the other to cease speaking. Either O'Rorke, however, did not understand the gesture, or he unheeded it. He went on,—

"'I'd rather,' says she, 'see my right hand cut off, than see it write these lines,' says she."

"There! there!" burst in Sir Within, "that will do—that is enough—say no more of this!"

But O'Rorke, intent on finding out what had been the relations between them, and why they had been severed, in spite of all admonition, continued,—

"'Sure, Miss Kate,' says I, 'it is not one that was once so kind and so generous to you will see you in trouble for a trifle like this. For of course it would be a trifle to your honour!"

"And yet she felt it a humiliation to ask me?" said he, despondingly.

"She did, indeed! 'For,' says she, 'he may refuse me.'"

"No, no; she never thought that; she knew me better than to believe it."

"Well, indeed, sir, it was what I thought myself, and I said in my own mind, 'It's more ashamed she is than afeard.'"

"Ashamed of what?" cried Sir Within, passionately. "What has shame to do with it?"

The subtle peasant saw through what a channel the misconception came, and, still bent on tracing out the mysterious tie between them, said,—

"After all, sir, for a young lady, and a handsome one, too, to ask a great favour of a gentleman not belonging to her, kith or kin, is a thing that bad tongues would make the worst of if they got hold of it."

Sir Within's sallow cheek flushed up, and in a broken voice he said,—

"Bad tongues are only tyrants to those who cannot brave them. Miss Kate Luttrell is not of their number. You shall soon see if these same bad tongues have any terrors for me."

"I'm a poor man, but I wasn't so always," said O'Rorke, "and I know well that it was slander and lying crushed *me*."

The diversion was intended to have awakened some curiosity as to his former condition, but Sir Within was perfectly indifferent on the subject. All the interest the messenger had in *his* eyes came from the fact that he came from *her*, that he had seen *her*, and was near her when she wrote.

"This island—I only know it by the map," said Sir Within, trying to talk in an easy, unconcerned strain—"it's very poor, I believe?"

"You might say wretched, and be nearer the mark."

"Is it celebrated for sport? Is the shooting or the fishing the great attraction?"

"There's no shooting, nor any fishing but the deep sea fishery; and more men are lost in that than there are fortunes made of it."

"And what could have induced Mr. Luttrell to take up his abode in such a spot?"

"The same thing that sends men off to America, and Australia, and New Zealand; the same thing that makes a man eat black bread when he can't get white; the same thing that—— But what's the use of telling you about the symptoms, when you never so much as heard of the disease?"

"Miss Luttrell's life must be a very lonely one," said Sir Within, with every effort to talk in a tone of unconcern.

"'Tis the wonder of wonders how she bears it. I asked the woman that lives with them how she passed her time and what she did, and she said, 'She takes up everything for a week or ten days, and goes at it as if her life depended on it.' One time it was gathering plants, and sprigs of heath, and moss, and the like—even seaweed she'd bring home—going after them up crags and cliffs that a goat couldn't climb. Then she'd give up that and take to gardening, and work all day long; then it was making fishing-nets; then it was keeping a school, and teaching the fishermen's children; she even tried to teach them to sing, till a sudden thought struck her that they ought to have a lifeboat on the island, and she sat to writing to all the people that she could think of to send a plan of one, meaning, I suppose"—here he grinned—"to make it herself afterwards."

Sir Within listened eagerly to all this, and then asked,—

"And her uncle—does he aid her in these projects?"

"He! It's little he troubles himself about her. Why, it's often three days that they don't even meet. They never take their meals together. It's a wonder of kindness from him the day that he'll tap the window of her room with his knuckles and say 'Good morning,' and when she'd get up to open the window to answer him, he'd be gone."

"How desolate—how dreary!" muttered the old man. "Does this wearisome life prey upon her? Is she altered in appearance—thinner or paler?"

"I'll tell you how she looks, and there's not a man in Ireland understands a woman's face better than him before you, and here's what it means in three words. It means scorn for a world that could let the like of her wither and waste on that lonely rock, for it's not alone beauty she has, but she has grace and elegance, and a way of charming about her that's more than beauty, and there's a something in her voice—what it is I don't know, but it goes on thrilling into you after she has done speaking, till you just feel that a spell was working in you, and making you a slave."

"And *you* have felt this?" said the old man, as though involuntarily demanding an avowal that would have set the seal of confirmation on her magic.

And the cunning Celt felt all the force of the sarcasm, while it did not suit his purpose to confess it. And yet it needed great self-control to suppress his rising anger, and keep him from declaring that in a matter of sentiment, or on a question of female captivation, he, Tim O'Rorke, patriot, martyr, and Paddy as he was, yielded to no man.

"Would you kindly ring that bell beside you, Mr.—Mr.——"

"O'Rorke, sir."

"Mr. O'Rorke, I am diffident about my pronunciation of Irish names," added the old diplomatist, cautiously veiling the sin of his forgetfulness. A servant speedily appeared, and Sir Within ordered him to take every care for "this gentleman's accommodation." "I shall be able to prepare my reply to this letter to-night, Mr. O'Rorke, and you will be free to leave this at any hour that may suit you in the morning."

O'Rorke retired from the presence, well satisfied with himself, and with the way he had acquitted himself.

"Would you like to have the papers, sir, or would you prefer seeing the gallery, while supper is getting ready?" asked the obsequious servant.

"I'll take a look at your pictures. I have a few myself," said Mr. O'Rorke; which was perfectly true, though they were not in the first taste as objects of art, being certain coloured prints of Hempenstall, the walking gallows, the capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and a few similar subjects from the year '98, in which, certes, the countenances bestowed on the Royalists essentially distinguished them in the most crowded mêlées from all honest patriots.

Leaving Mr. O'Rorke, then, to examine at his leisure Sir Within's varied treasures, we make no excuse to our reader for not recording the criticism he passed upon them.

CHAPTER L.

TWO OF A TRADE.

WHETHER an uneasy consciousness that he might not be able to display a proper spirit of connoisseurship before that bland, soft-spoken domestic who accompanied him through the picture-gallery, and who, doubtless, had enjoyed various opportunities of imbibing critical notions on art, disposed Mr. O'Rorke—or whether he deemed that his own enjoyment of the splendour would be higher if unwitnessed, is not given to us to pronounce; but so it was, that he dismissed his guide very soon, and declared that he preferred to ramble about quite alone. The well-trained servant bowed and withdrew, and Mr. O'Rorke was left to revel at will amidst the magnificence of Dalradern.

There were art treasures there to have fixed the attention and captivated the gaze of more cultivated admirers; but these attracted less of his notice than the splendid furniture, the inlaid tables, the richly-encrusted cabinets, the gorgeously gilded "consoles," which, as he surveyed, he appraised, till he actually lost himself in the arithmetic of his valuation. Nor was this mere unprofitable speculation; far from it. Mr. O'Rorke was a most practical individual, and the point to which his calculation led him was this: How much depletion will all this plethora admit of? What amount of money may be a fair sum to extract from a man of such boundless wealth? "I'd have let him off for a hundred pounds," said he to himself, "as I came up the avenue, and I wouldn't take three now, to give him a receipt in full!" In the true spirit of a brigand, he estimated that his prisoner's ransom should be assessed by the measure of his fortune.

Wandering on from room to room, still amazed at the extent and splendour he surveyed, he opened the door, and suddenly found himself in a large room brilliantly lighted, and with a table copiously covered with fruit and wine. As he stood, astonished at the sight, a voice cried out, "Holloa, who's that? What do you want?" And though O'Rorke would willingly have retreated he was much embarrassed by his intrusion that he could not move.

"Who the —— are you?" cried out the voice again. And now O'Rorke perceived that a young man was half-sitting, half-lying in the recess of a very deep chair beside the fire, with his legs resting on another chair. "I say," cried he, again, "what brings you here?" And as it was young Ladarelle that spoke, the reader may possibly imagine that the tone was not over conciliatory.

Retreat was now out of the question, not to say that Mr. O'Rorke had regained his self-possession, and was once more assured and collected. Advancing, therefore, till he came in front of the other, he made his apologies for the accident of his intrusion, and explained how he happened to be there.

"And where's the letter you say you brought?" broke in Ladarelle, hurriedly.

"I gave it to Sir Within Wardle; he has it now."

"Where did it come from? Who wrote it?"

"It came from Ireland, and from a part of Ireland that, maybe, you never heard of."

"And the writer—who was he?"

"That's no business of *mine*," said O'Rorke; but he contrived to give the words the significance that would mean, "Nor of *yours* either."

"I think I can guess without your help, my worthy friend; and I have suspected it would come to this for many a day. What relation are you to her?"

"Your honour must explain yourself better, if you want a clear answer," replied he, in some confusion.

"Don't fence with me, my fine fellow. I'm more than your match at that game. I see the whole thing with half an eye. She wants to come back!"

As he said the last words he sat up straight in the chair, and darted a searching, stern look at the other.

"Faix, this is all riddles to *me*," said O'Rorke, folding his hands, and looking his very utmost to seem like one puzzled and confused.

"What a —— fool you are," cried Ladarelle, passionately, "not to see that you may as well tell me now, what, before two hours are over, I shall know for nothing: out with it. What was in the letter?"

"How can I tell what's in a sealed letter?" said O'Rorke, sulkily, for he was not very patient under this mode of interrogation.'

"You know who wrote it, at all events?"

"I'll tell you what I know!" said O'Rorke, resolutely. "That I'll not answer any more questions, and that I'll leave this room now."

As he turned towards the door, Ladarelle sprang up and said, "You mistake me, my good fellow, if you think I want all this for nothing. If you knew a little more of me you'd see I was a pleasanter fellow to deal with than my old relation yonder. What is your name?"

"My name," said he, with a sort of dogged pride—"*my* name is O'Rorke."

"Timothy O'Rorke? Ain't I right?"

"You are indeed, however you knew it."

"You shall soon see. I have had a letter for you in my writing-desk for many a long day. 'Timothy O'Rorke, Vinegar Hill, Cush—— something or other, Ireland.'"

"And who wrote it, sir?" said O'Rorke, approaching him, and speaking in a low, anxious voice.

"I'll be more frank with you than you are with me. I'll give you the letter, O'Rorke."

"But tell me who wrote it?"

"One who was your well wisher, and who told me I might trust you."

There was never a more puzzling reply than this, for Mr. O'Rorke well knew that there were few who thought well of him, and fewer who trusted him.

"Sit down. Take a glass of wine. Drink this." And as he spoke he filled a large goblet with sherry.

O'Rorke drained it, and looked happier.

"Take another," said Ladarelle, as he filled it out, and O'Rorke complied, smacking his lips with satisfaction as he finished.

"When you have read the letter I'll give you this evening, O'Rorke, you'll see that we are two men who will readily understand each other. My friend Grenfell said——"

"Was it Mr. Grenfell wrote it?" broke in O'Rorke.

"It was. You remember him, then? He was afraid you might have forgotten his name."

"That's what I never did yet."

"All right then. What he said was, 'Show O'Rorke that you mean to deal liberally with him. Let him see that you don't want to drive a hard bargain, and he'll stand by you like a man.'"

"When he said that, he knew me well."

"He said that you were a fine-hearted, plucky fellow, who had not the success he deserved in life."

"And he said true; and he might have said that others made a stepping-stone of me, and left me to my fate when they passed over me!"

The door opened at this moment, and the bland butler announced that the "gentleman's supper was served."

"Come in here, Mr. O'Rorke, when you have finished, and I'll give you a cigar. I want to hear more about the snipe shooting," said Ladarelle, carelessly; and, without noticing the other's leave-takings, he returned to his easy-chair and his musings.

"I wonder which of the two is best to deal with," muttered O'Rorke to himself, and on this text he speculated as he ate his meal. It was a very grand moment of his existence, certainly; he was served on silver, fed by a French cook, and waited on by two servants—one being the black-coated gentleman, whose duty seemed to be in anticipating Mr. O'Rorke's desires for food or drink, and whose marvellous instincts were never mistaken. "Port, always port," said he, holding up his glass. "It is the wine that I generally drink at home."

"This is fourteen, sir; and considered very good," said the butler, obsequiously; for humble as the guest appeared, his master's orders were to treat him with every deference and attention.

"Fourteen or fifteen, I don't care which," said O'Rorke, not aware to what the date referred; "but the wine pleases me, and I'll have another bottle of it."

He prolonged his beatitude till midnight, and though Mr. Fisk came twice to suggest that Mr. Ladarelle would like to see him, O'Rorke's answer was, each time, "The day for business, the evening for relaxation. Them's my sentiments, young man."

At last a more peremptory message arrived, that Mr. Ladarelle wanted him at once, and O'Rorke with a promptitude that astonished the messenger, arose, and, cooling his brow and bathing his temples with a wet napkin, seemed in an instant to restore himself to his habitual calm.

"Where is he?" asked he.

"In his dressing-room. I'll show you the way," said Fisk. "I don't think you'll find him in a pleasant humour, though. You've tried his patience a bit."

"Not so easy to get speech of you, Mr. O'Rorke," said Ladarelle, when they were alone. "This is about the third or fourth time I have sent to say I wanted you."

"The port, sir, the port! It was impossible to leave it. Indeed, I don't know how I tore myself away at last."

"It will be your own fault if you haven't a bin of it in your cellar at home."

"How so?"

"I mean that as this old place and all belonging to it must one day be mine, it will be no very difficult matter to me to recompense the man who has done me a service."

"And are you the heir, sir?" asked O'Rorke, for the first time his voice indicating a tone of deference.

"Yes, it all comes to me; but my old relative is bent on trying my patience. What would you say his age was?"

"He's not far off eighty."

"He wants six or seven years of it. Indeed, until the other day he did not look seventy. He broke down all at once."

"That's the way they all do," said O'Rorke, sententiously.

"Yes, but now and then they make a rally, Master O'Rorke, and that's what I don't fancy; do you understand me?"

In the piercing look that accompanied these words there seemed no common significance, and O'Rorke, drawing closer to the speaker, dropped his voice to a mere whisper, and said, "Do you want to get rid of him?"

"I'd be much obliged to him if he would die," said the other, with a laugh.

"Of course—of course that's what I mean," said O'Rorke, who now began to suspect he was going too fast.

"I'll be frank with you, O'Rorke, because I want you; but, first of all, there's the letter I had for you," and he pitched the document across the table.

O'Rorke drew the candle towards him, and perused the paper slowly and carefully.

"Well!" said Ladarelle, when he had finished—"well! what do you say to that?"

"I say two things to it," said O'Rorke, calmly. "The first is, what am I to do? and the second is, what am I to get for it?"

"What you are to do is this: you are to serve my interest, and help me in every way in your power."

"Am I to break the law?" burst in O'Rorke.

"No—at least, no very serious breach."

"Nothing against that old man up there?" And he made a strange and significant gesture, implying violence.

"No, no, nothing of the kind. You don't think me such a fool as to risk a halter out of mere impatience. I'll run neither you nor myself into such danger as that. When I said you were to serve me, it was in such ways as a man may help another by zeal, activity, ready-wittedness, and now and then, perhaps, throwing overboard a few scruples, and proving his friendship by straining his conscience."

"Well, I won't haggle about that. My conscience is a mighty polite conscience, and never drops in on me without an invitation!"

"The man I want—the very man. Grenfell told me you were," said Ladarelle, taking his hand, and shaking it cordially. "Now let me see if you can be as frank with *me* as I have been with you, O'Rorke. What was this letter that you brought here this evening? Was it from *her?*"

"It was."

"From herself—by her own hand?"

"By her own hand!"

"Are you perfectly sure of that?"

"I saw her write it."

Ladarelle took a turn up and down the room after this without speaking. At last he broke out,—

"And this is the high spirit and the pride they've been cramming me with! This is the girl they affected to say would die of hunger rather than ask forgiveness!"

"And they knew her well that said it. It's just what she'd do!"

"How can you say that now? Here she is begging to be taken back again!"

"Who says so?"

"Was not that the meaning of the letter?"

"It was not—the devil a bit of it! I know well what was in it, though I didn't read it. It was to ask Sir Within Wardle to send her some money to pay for the defence of her grandfather, that's to be tried for murder next Tuesday week. It nearly broke her heart to stoop to it, but I made her do it. She called it a shame and a disgrace, and the tears ran down her face; and, by my soul, it's not a trifle would make the same young lady cry!"

"After all, the intention is to open a way to come back here?"

"I don't believe it."

"I suspect, Master O'Rorke, this is rather a pleasanter place to live in than the Arran Islands."

"So it is; there's no doubt of that! But she is young, and thinks more about her pride than her profit not to say that she comes of a stock that's as haughty in their own wild way as ever a peer in the land."

"There never was a better bait to catch that old man there than this same pride. She has just hit upon the key to move him. What did he say when he read the letter?"

"He couldn't speak for a while, but kept wiping his eyes and trembling all over."

"And then?"

"And then he said, 'Stop here to-night, Mr. O'Rorke, and I'll have your answer ready for you in the morning.'"

"And shall I tell you what it will be? It will be to implore her to come back here. She can have her own terms now; and she may be My Lady."

"Do you mean his wife?"

"I do."

O'Rorke gave a long whistle, and stood a perfect picture of amazement and wonder.

"That *was* playing for a big stake! May I never! if I thought she was bowld enough for that."

"That she was. And how she missed it to this hour I never knew. But whatever happened between them was one evening, on the strand at a sea-side place abroad. That much I learned from her maid, who was in my pay; and it must have been serious, for she left the house that night, and never returned; and, what is more, never wrote one line to him till this letter that you carried here yesterday."

So astounded was O'Rorke by what he heard, that for some minutes he scarcely followed what Ladarelle was saying.

"So that," continued Ladarelle, "it may not be impossible that he had the hardihood to make her some such proposal."

"Do you mean without marriage?" broke in O'Rorke, suddenly catching the clue. "Do you mean that?"

The other nodded.

"No, by all that's holy!" cried O'Rorke. "That he never did! You might trick her, you might cheat her—and it wouldn't be so easy to do it, either—but take my word for it, the man that would insult her, and get off free, isn't yet born!"

"What could she do, except go off?" said Ladarelle, scoffingly.

"That's not the stuff they're made of where she comes from, young man."

And, in his eagerness, he for a moment forgot all respect and deference; nor did the other seem to resent the liberty, for he only smiled as he heard it, and then said,—

"All I have been telling you now is merely to prepare you for what I want you to do, and mind, if you stand by me faithfully and well, your fortune is made. I ask no man's help without being ready and willing to pay for it—to pay handsomely, too! Is that intelligible?"

"Quite intelligible."

"Now the short and long of the story is this: if this old fool were to marry that girl, he could encumber my estate—for it is mine—with a jointure, and I have no fancy to pay some twelve or fifteen hundred a year—perhaps more—to Biddy somebody, and have, besides, a lawsuit for plate, or pictures, or china, or jewels, that she claimed as matter of gift—and all this, that an old worn-out rake should end his life with an act of absurdity!"

"And he could leave her fifteen hundred a year for ever," muttered O'Rorke, thoughtfully.

"Nothing of the kind. For her life only; and even that, I believe, we might break by law—at least, Palmer says so."

All this Ladarelle said hastily, for he half suspected he had made a grievous blunder in pointing out the wealth to which she would succeed as Sir Within's widow.

"I see—I see!" muttered O'Rorke, thoughtfully; which simply meant that there was a great deal to be said for each side of the question.

"What are you thinking of?" said Ladarelle at last, losing patience at his prolonged silence.

"I'm just wondering to myself if she ever knew how near she was to being My Lady."

"How near, or how far off, you mean!"

"No, I don't! I just mean what I said—how near. You don't know her as well as I do, that's clear!" Another long pause followed these words, and each followed out his own train of thought. At length, Ladarelle, not at all satisfied, as it seemed, with his own diplomacy, said, half-impatiently: "My friend Grenfell said, if there was any one who would understand how to deal with this matter, you were the man; and it was with that view he gave me the letter you have just read."

"Oh! there's many a way to deal with it," said O'Rorke, who was not insensible to the flattery. "That is to say, if she was anything else but the girl she is, there would be no trouble at all in it."

"You want me to believe that she is something very uncommon, and that she knows the world, like a woman of fashion."

"I know nothing about women of fashion, but I never saw man or woman yet was 'cuter than Katty O'Hara, or Luttrell, as she calls herself now."

"She did not play her cards here so cunningly, that's plain," said Ladarelle, with a sneer.

"Maybe I can guess why."

"What is your guess, then?"

"Something happened that wounded her pride! If anything did *that*, she'd forget herself and her advantage—aye, her very life—and she'd think of nothing but being revenged. That's the blood that's in her!"

"So that her pride is her weak point?"

"You have it now! That's it. I think she'd rather have died than write that letter the other morning, and if the answer isn't what she expects, I don't think she'll get over it! Without," added he, quickly, "it would drive her to some vengeance or other, if she was to see the way to any."

"I begin to understand her," said Ladarelle, thoughtfully.

"The devil a bit of you! And if you were to think of it for twenty years, you wouldn't understand her! She beats *me*, and I don't suspect that *you* do."

This was one of those thrusts it was very hard to bear without wincing, but Ladarelle turned away, and concealed the pain he felt.

"It is evident, then, Mr. O'Rorke, that you don't feel yourself her match?"

"I didn't say that; but it would be no disgrace if I *did* say it," was the cautious answer.

"Mr. Grenfell assured me, that with a man like yourself to aid me, I need not be afraid of any difficulty. Do you feel as if he said too much for you, or has he promised more than you like to fulfil? You see, by what I have told you, that I should be very sorry to see that girl here again, or know that she was likely to regain any part of her old influence over my relative. Now, though her present letter does not touch either of these points, it opens a correspondence; don't you perceive that?"

"Go on," said O'Rorke, half sulkily, for a sort of doubt was creeping over him, that possibly his services ought to be retained by the other party.

"And if they once begin writing letters, and if she only be as ready with her pen as you say she is with her tongue, there's nothing to prevent her being back here this day week, on any terms she pleases."

"Faix, and there are worse places! May I never! if I'd wonder that she'd like to be mistress of it."

For the second time had Ladarelle blundered in his negotiation, and he was vexed and angry as he perceived it.

"That's not all so plain and easy, Mr. O'Rorke, as you imagine. When old men make fools of themselves, the law occasionally takes them at their word, and pronounces them insane. So long as Sir Within's eccentricities were harmless, we bore them, but I'll not promise our patience for serious injury."

If O'Rorke was not convinced by this threat, he was sufficiently staggered by it to become more thoughtful, and at last he said :—

"And what is it you'd propose to do?"

"I'd rather put that question to *you*," said Ladarelle, softly. "You have the case before you; what's your remedy?"

"If she was any other girl, I'd say give her a couple of hundred pounds, and get her married and out of the way."

"And why not do so here?"

"Because it would be no use; that's the why."

"Is she not a peasant? Are not all belonging to her people in the very humblest station, and not blessed with the best possible reputations?"

"They're poor enough, if that's what you mean; and they're the very sort of men that would make mighty short work of *you*, if you were to harm one belonging to them."

"I promise you faithfully I'll not go to reside in the neighbourhood," said Ladarelle, with a laugh.

"I've known them track a man to America before now."

"Come, come, Mr. O'Rorke, your countrymen may be as like Red Indians as you please, but they have no terrors for *me*."

"So much the better; but I've seen just as big men as yourself afraid of them."

The quiet coolness of this speech sent a far stronger sense of fear through the other's heart than any words of menace could have done, and it required a great effort on his part to seem collected.

"You say she cannot be bought over, O'Rorke; now, what other line is open to us?"

O'Rorke made no reply, but seemed lost in thought.

"What if she were to believe that Sir Within wouldn't receive her letter, or read it, and sent back a cold, unfeeling answer?" Still no answer passed his lips. "If," continued Ladarelle, "you were to return and say you had failed, what would she do then? She'd never write to him again, I suppose?"

"Never, that you may depend upon, but it wouldn't be so easy to make her believe it."

"That might be managed. First of all, tell me how she would take the tidings."

"I don't know. I could not even guess."

"At all events, she'd not write to him again?"

"For that I'll answer. I believe I could take my oath on it."

"Now, then, the game is easy enough," said Ladarelle, with a more assured tone. "You are to have Sir Within's answer to-morrow. When you get it, set out for Wrexham, where I'll meet you. We'll open it and read it. If it be a simple acceptance of her note, and a mere compliance with her request, I'll re-seal with his crest, and you shall take it on to her; but if, as I suspect, the old man will make an effort to renew their former relations, and throw out any bait to induce her to come back here——"

"Well, what then?" asked O'Rorke, after waiting a few seconds for the other to continue.

"In that case we must lay our heads together, O'Rorke, and see what's best to be done."

"And the old man that's in gaol, and that's to be tried on the 19th, what's to be done about him?"

"I'll think of that."

"He hasn't a great chance anyway, but if there's no defence, it's all up with him."

"I'll think of that."

"Then there's myself," said O'Rorke, drawing his figure up to his full height, as though the subject was one that entailed no painful modesty. "What about *me?*"

"I have thought of that already. Put that in your pocket for the present"—and he pressed a note into his hand—"and when to-morrow comes you shall name your own conditions. Only stand by me to the end—mind that."

O'Rorke opened the bank-note leisurely, and muttered the word "Twenty;" and certainly nothing in the accent showed enthusiastic gratitude.

"I can give you an order on my banker to-morrow," said Ladarelle, hurriedly, "but I am rather low in cash here, just now; and I repeat it—your own terms, O'Rorke, your own terms."

"I suppose so," was the dry rejoinder.

"It's not everybody would make you the same proposal."

"It's not everybody has so much need of me as you have."

Ladarelle tried to laugh as he wished him good-night, but the attempt was a poor one, and all he could say as they parted, was:—

"Wrexham—the Boar's Head—the inn on the left hand as you enter the town. I'll be on the look-out for you myself."

O'Rorke nodded and withdrew.

"Vulgar scoundrel! I wish I had never spoken to him!" said Ladarelle, as soon as the door closed. "This is all Grenfell's doing; he has just shoved me into the hands of a fellow that will only serve me till he finds a higher bidder. What a fool I have been to open myself to him; and he sees it well! And as for the ready-wittedness and expediency, I wonder where they are! Why, the rascal had not a single suggestion to offer; he kept on harping about the difficulties, and never a word did he drop as to how to meet them."

And, with a hearty malediction on him, Ladarelle concluded his meditation, and went off to sleep.

CHAPTER LI.

THE BOAR'S HEAD.

LADARELLE stood at a window of the Boar's Head which commanded a view of the road into the town, and waited, watch in hand, for O'Rorke's coming. The morning passed, and noon, and it was late in the day when a wearied horse, over-driven and steaming, drew up at the door, and the long looked-for traveller alighted.

Though burning with impatience to learn his news, Ladarelle saw the necessity of concealing his anxiety, and, opening his writing desk, he affected to be deeply engaged writing when, conducted by a waiter, O'Rorke appeared.

A single glance as he passed the threshold told Ladarelle that his tidings were important. Already the fellow's swagger declared it, and in the easy confidence with which he sat down, and in the careless way he rather threw than laid his hat on the table, might be seen that he felt himself "master of the situation."

"You are later than I expected," said Ladarelle, carelessly.

"I didn't leave the place till after twelve. He made me go over the gardens, and the forcing-houses, and after that the stables, till at one time I thought I'd not get away till to-morrow."

"And what do you think of it all?"

"Grand!—grand! It's the finest place I ever saw, and well kept up, too. There's eight men in the garden, and the head gardener told me he might have as many more, if he wanted them."

"The horses are over-fed; they are like prize oxen."

"They're fat, to be sure; but it's fine to see them standing there, with their glossy skins, and their names over them, and their tails hanging down like tassels, and no more call for them to work than if they were lords themselves."

"I'll make a grand clearance of all that rubbish one day. I'll have none of those German elephants, I promise you, when I come to the property."

"He isn't going to make room for you yet awhile, he says," said O'Rorke, with a grin.

"What do you mean?"

"If what he said to me this morning is to be relied on, he means to marry."

"And have a family, perhaps?" added Ladarelle, with a laugh.

"He said nothing about that; he talked like a man that hoped to see many years, and happy ones."

"No one ever lived the longer for wishing it, or else we heirs-expectant would have a bad time of it. But this is not the question. What answer did he give you?"

"There it is."

And, as he spoke, he drew from his breast-pocket a large square-shaped letter, massively sealed, and after showing the address, "Miss Luttrell," on the cover, he replaced it in his pocket.

"Do you know what's in it?" asked Ladarelle, sharply.

"Only that there's money, that's all, for he said to me, 'Any banker will cash it.'"

Ladarelle took a couple of turns of the room without speaking; then, coming directly in front of the other, he said,—

"Now, then, Mr. O'Rorke, which horse do you back? Where do you stand to win? I mean, are you going to serve Sir Within or me?"

"He is the bird in the hand, any way!" said O'Rorke, with a grin of malicious meaning.

"Well, if you think so, I have no more to say, only that as shrewd a man as you are might see that an old fellow on the verge of the grave is not likely to be as lasting a friend as a man like myself. In other words, which life would you prefer in your lease?"

O'Rorke made no answer, but seem'd sunk in thought.

"I'll put the case before you in three words. You might help this girl in her plans—you might aid her so far that she could come back here, and remain either as this old man's wife or mistress—I don't know that there would be much difference, in fact, as the law stands, between the two—but how long would you be a welcome visitor here after that? You speculate on being able to come and go, and stay here just as you please; you'd like to have this place as a home you could come to whenever you pleased, and be treated not merely with respect and attention, but with cordiality. Now, I just ask you, from what you have yourself told me of this girl, is that what you would expect when she was the mistress? Is she so staunch to her own people, that she would be true to *you?*"

For some minutes O'Rorke made no answer, and then, leaning both arms on the table before him, he said, in a slow, measured voice, "What do you offer me yourself?"

"I said last night, and I repeat it now, make your own terms."

O'Rorke shook his head, and was silent.

"I am willing," resumed Ladarelle, "to make you my land-steward, give you a house and a plot of ground rent free, and pay you eighty pounds a year. I'll make it a hundred if I see you stand well to me!"

"I've got some debts," muttered O'Rorke, in a low voice.

"What do they amount to?"

"Oh, they're heavy enough; but I could settle them for a couple of hundreds."

"I'll pay them, then."

"And, after that, I'd rather go abroad. I'd like to go and settle in Australia."

"How much money would that require?"

"I want to set up a newspaper, and I couldn't do it under two thousand pounds."

"That's a big sum, Master O'Rorke."

"The devil a much the old man at the Castle there would think of it, if it helped him to what he wanted."

"I mean, it's a big sum to raise at a moment, but I don't say it would be impossible."

"Will you give it then? That's the short way to put it. Will you give it?"

"First, let me ask for what am I to give it? Is it that you will stand by me in this business to the very end, doing whatever I ask you, flinching at nothing, and taking every risk equally with myself?"

"And no risk that you don't share yourself?"

"None!"

"It's worth thinking about, anyhow," said O'Rorke, as he arose and paced the room, with his hands deep in his pockets; "that is if the money is paid down—down on the nail—for I won't take a bill, mind."

"I'm afraid, O'Rorke, your experiences in life have not taught you to be very confiding."

"I'll tell you what they've taught me; they've taught me that wherever there's money in anything, a man ought not to trust his own mother."

In a few hurried words, Ladarelle explained that till he came to his estate, all his dealings for ready money were of the most ruinous kind; that to raise two thousand would cost him eventually nearly four; and, as he phrased it, "I'd rather see the difference in the pocket of an honest fellow who stood to me, than a rascally Jew who rogued me."

"I'll give you a post obit on Sir Within's estate for three thousand, and so far as a hundred pounds goes to pay your voyage, you shall not want it."

O'Rorke did not at first like the terms. Whenever he ventured his chances in life, things had turned out ill; all his lottery tickets were blanks, and he shook his head doubtingly, and made no reply.

"Five o'clock already! I must be going," said Ladarelle, suddenly looking at his watch.

"That's a fine watch!" said O'Rorke, as he gazed at the richly-embossed crest on the case.

"If having my arms on the back is no objection to you, O'Rorke, take it. I make you a present of it."

O'Rorke peered into his face with an inquisitiveness so full of unbelief as almost to be laughable, but the expression changed to a look of delight as Ladarelle took the chain from off his neck and handed the whole to him.

"May I never!" cried O'Rorke, "if I won't be your equal. There's the letter!" And he drew forth Sir Within's despatch, and placed it in his hands.

Concealing all the delight he felt at this unlooked-for success, Ladarelle retired to the window to read the letter; nor did he at once break the seal. Some scruple—there were not many left him—did still linger amidst the wreck of his nature, and he felt that what he was about to do was a step lower in baseness than he had hitherto encountered. "After all," muttered he, "if I hesitate about this, how am I to meet what is before me?" And so he broke the seal and tore open the envelope. "The old fool! the infatuated old fool!" broke from him, in an accent of bitter scorn, as he ran his eye over the three lines which a trembling hand had traced. "I knew it would come to this. I said so all along. Here's an order to pay Miss Luttrell or bearer two hundred pounds!" said he, turning to O'Rorke. "We must not cash this, or we should get into a precious scrape."

"And what's in the letter?" asked O'Rorke, carelessly.

"Nothing beyond his readiness to be of use, and all that. He writes with difficulty, he says, and that's not hard to believe—an infernal scrawl it is—and he promises to send a long letter by the post to-morrow. By the way, how do they get the letters at Arran?"

"They send for them once a week to the mainland; on Saturdays, if I remember aright."

"We must arrest this correspondence, then, or we shall be discovered at once. How can we obtain her letters?"

"Easy enough. I know the boy that comes for them, and he can't read, though he can tell the number of letters that he should have. I'll have one ready to substitute for any that should be to her address."

"Well thought of. I see, O'Rorke, you *are* the man I wanted; now listen to me attentively, and hear my plan. I must return to the Castle, and pretend that I have pressing business in town. Instead of taking the London mail, however, I shall proceed to Holyhead, where you must wait for me at the inn, the Watkins' Arms. I hope to be there to-morrow morning early, but it may be evening before I can arrive. Wait, at all events, for my coming."

"Remember that I promised to be back in Arran, with the answer to her letter, by Saturday."

"So you shall. It is fully as important for *me* that you should keep your word."

"Does he want her back again?" said O'Rorke, not fully satisfied that he had not seen Sir Within's note.

"No, not exactly; at least, it is evasive, and very short. It is simply to this purport: 'I conclude you have made a mistake by leaving me, and think you might have humility enough to acknowledge it; meanwhile, I send you a cheque for two hundred. I shall write to-morrow more fully.'"

O'Rorke was thoroughly aware, by the stammering confusion of the other's manner, that these were not the terms of the note; but it was a matter which interested him very little, and he let it pass unchallenged. His calculation—and he had given a whole night to it—was briefly this: "If I serve Sir Within, I may possibly be well and handsomely rewarded, but I shall obtain no power of pressure upon him; under no circumstances can I extort from him one shilling beyond what he may be disposed to give me. If, on the other hand, I stand by Ladarelle, his whole character is in my hands. He is too unscrupulous not to compromise himself, and though his accomplice, I shall do everything in such a way that one day, if I need it, I may appear to have been his dupe. And such a position as this can be the source of untold money."

Nor was it a small inducement to him to think that the side he adopted was adverse to Kate. Why he disliked her he knew not—that is, he would not have been well able to say why. Perhaps he might not readily have admitted the fact, though he well knew that to see her great, and prosperous, and high-placed, a winner in that great lottery of life where he had failed so egregiously, would be to him the most intense misery, and he would have done much to prevent it.

Along with these thoughts were others, speculating on Ladarelle himself, and whom he was sorely puzzled whether to regard more as a knave or fool, or an equal mixture of the two. "He'll soon see that whatever he does he mustn't try to cheat Tim O'Rorke," muttered he; "and when he gets that far, I'll not trouble myself more about his education."

CHAPTER LII.

THE NIGHT AT SEA.

The Saturday—the eventful day on which Kate was to have her answer from Sir Within—came at last. It was a dark, lowering morning, and though there was scarcely an air of wind, the sea rolled heavily in, and broke in great showers of spray over the rocks, sure sign that a storm was raging at a distance.

From an early hour she had been down to the shore to watch if any boat could be seen, but not a sail could be descried, and the fishermen told her that though the wind had a faint sound in it, there were few Westport men would like to venture out in such a sea.

"If you cannot see a boat before noon, Tim Hennesy," said she to one of the boatmen, "you'll have to man the yawl, for I mean to go over myself."

"It will be a hard beat against the wind, miss," said the man. "It will take you an hour to get out of the bay here."

"I suppose we shall reach Westport before morning?"

"It will be no bad job if we get in by this time to-morrow."

She turned angrily away; she hated opposition in every shape, and even the semblance of anything like discouragement chafed and irritated her.

"No sign of your messenger?" said Luttrell, from the window of the tower, whither he had gone to have a look out over the sea.

"It is early yet, sir. If they came out on the ebb we should not see them for at least another hour."

He made no answer, but closed the window and withdrew.

"Get me a loaf of bread, Molly, and some hard eggs and a bottle of milk," said Kate, as she entered the house.

"And sure, miss, it's not off to the mountains you'll be going such a day as this. It will be a down-pour of rain before evening, and you have a bad cough on you already."

"You must lend me your cloak, too, Molly," said she, not heeding the remonstrance, "it's much warmer than my own."

"Ain't I proud that it would be on your back, the Heavens bless and protect you! But where are you going that you want a cloak?"

"Go and ask my uncle if I may speak to him."

Molly went, and came back at once to say that Mr. Luttrell was in his room below, and she might come there when she pleased.

"I am thinking of going over to Westport, sir," said Kate, as she passed the threshold. "My impatience is fevering me, and I want to do something."

"Listen to the sea, young woman; it is no day to go out, and those drifting clouds tell that it will be worse by-and-by."

"All the better if it blows a little, it will take me off thinking of other cares."

"I'll not hear of it—there!"

And he waved his hand as though to dismiss her, but she never moved, but stood calm and collected where she was.

"You remember, sir, to-day is Saturday, and very little time is now left us for preparation. By going over to the mainland, I shall meet O'Rorke, and save his journey here and back again, and the chances are, that, seeing the day rough, he'd not like to leave Westport this morning."

"I have told you my mind, that is enough," said he, with an impatient gesture; but she stood still, and never quitted the spot. "I don't suppose you have heard me, Miss Luttrell," said he, with a tone of suppressed passion.

"Yes, sir, I have heard you, but you have not heard *me*. My poor old grandfather's case is imminent; whatever measures are to be taken for his defence cannot be deferred much longer. If the plan I adopted should turn out a failure, I must think of another, and that quickly."

"What is this old peasant to me?" broke out Luttrell, fiercely. "Is this low-lived family to persecute me to my last day? You must not leave me—you shall not—I am not to be deserted for the sake of a felon!—I'll not hear of it!—Go! Leave me!"

She moved gently towards him, and laid her hand on the back of his chair.

"Dear uncle," said she, in a low, soft voice, "it would grieve you sorely if aught befel this poor old man—aught, I mean, that we could have prevented. Let me go and see if I cannot be of some use to him."

"Go?—go where?—do you mean to the gaol?"

"Yes, sir, I mean to see him."

"The very thing I have forbidden. The express compact by which you came here was, no intercourse with this—this—family, and now that the contact has become a stain and a disgrace, now is the moment you take to draw closer to them."

"I want to show I am worthy to be a Luttrell, sir. It was their boast that they never deserted their wounded."

"They never linked their fortunes to felons and murderers, young woman. I will hear no more of this."

"I hope to be back here by to-morrow night, uncle," said she, softly, and she bent down her head over him till the long silky curls of her golden hair grazed his temple.

He brushed them rudely back, and in a stern tone said,—

"To such as leave this against my consent there is no road back. Do you hear me?"

"I do," said she, faintly.

"Do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"Enough, then. Leave me now, and let me have peace."

"Uncle, dear uncle," she began; but he stopped her at once.

"None of this—none of this with me, young woman. You are free to make your choice; you are my adopted daughter, or, you are the grandchild of a man whose claim to be notorious will soon dispute with ours. It is an easy thing to make up your mind upon."

"I have done so already, sir."

"Very well, so much the better. Leave me now. I wish to be alone."

"Let me say good-bye, sir; let me kiss your hand, and say, for the last time, how grateful I am for all your past kindness."

He never spoke, but continued to stare at her with an expression of wonderment and surprise.

"Would you leave me, then?—would you leave me, Kate?" muttered he, at last.

"No, sir, if the door be not closed against me—never!"

"None but yourself can close that door against you."

"Dear, kind uncle, only hear me. It may be, that I have failed in the scheme I planned; it may be that some other road must be found to help this poor, forlorn, friendless old man. Let me at least see him; let me give him what comfort a few kind words can give; let him know that he has sympathy in his hour of sadness."

"Sympathy with the felon—sympathy with the murderer, I have none. I feel shame—bitter, bitter shame—that I cannot disclaim him—disavow him. My own miserable rashness and folly brought me to this, but when I descended to their poverty, I did not descend to their crimes."

"Well," said she, haughtily, "*I* have no such excuses to shelter me. I am of them by blood, as I am in heart. *I*'ll not desert him."

"May your choice be fortunate," said he, with mockery: "but remember, young woman, that when once you pass under the lintel of the gaol, you forfeit every right to enter here again. It is but fair that you know it."

"I know it, sir; good-bye." She stooped to take his hand, but he drew it rudely from her, and she raised the skirt of his coat to her lips and kissed it.

"Remember, young woman, if the time comes that you shall tell of this desertion of me—this cold, unfeeling desertion—take care you tell the truth. No harping on Luttrell pride, or Luttrell sternness—no pretending that it was the man of birth could not accept companionship of misery with the plebeian; but the simple fact, that when the hour of a decided allegiance came, you stood by the criminal and abandoned the gentleman. There is the simple fact; deny it if you dare!"

"There is not one will dare to question me, sir, and your caution is unneeded."

"Your present conduct is no guarantee for future prudence."

"Dear uncle——" she began; but he stopped her hastily, and said,—

"It is useless to recall our relationship when you have dissolved its ties."

"Oh, sir, do not cast me off because I am unhappy."

"Here is your home, Kate," said he, coldly. "Whenever you leave it, it is of your own free will, not of mine. Go now, if you wish, but, remember, you go at your peril."

She darted a fierce look at him as he uttered the last word, as though it had pierced her like a dart, and for a moment she seemed as if her temper could no longer be kept under; but with an effort she conquered, and simply saying, "I accept the peril, sir," she turned and left the room.

She gave her orders to the crew of the launch to get ready at once, and sent down to the boat her little basket, and then, while Molly Ryan was absent, she packed her trunk with whatever she possessed, and prepared to leave Arran, if it might be, for ever. Her tears ran fast as she bent over her task, and they relieved her overwrought mind, for she was racked and torn by a conflict—a hard conflict—in which different hopes, and fears, and ambitions warred, and struggled for the mastery.

"Here is the hour of destitution—the long-dreaded hour come at last, and it finds me less prepared to brave it than I thought for. By this time to-morrow the sun will not shine on one more friendless than myself. I used to fancy with what courage I could meet this fall, and even dare it. Where is all my bravery now?"

"'Tis blowin' harder, Miss Kate; and Tim Hennesy says it's only the beginnin' of it, and that he's not easy at all about taking you out in such weather."

"Tell Tim Hennesy, that if I hear any more of his fears *I'll* not take *him*. Let them carry that trunk down, Molly; I shall be away some days, and those things there are for you."

"Sure, ain't you coming back, miss?" cried the woman, whose cheeks became ashy pale with terror.

"I have told you I am going for a few days; and, Molly, till I *do* come, be more attentive than ever to my uncle; he may miss me, and he is not well just now, and be sure you look to him. Keep the key, too, of this room of mine, unless my uncle asks for it."

"Oh, you're not coming back to us—you'll never come back!" cried the poor creature, in an agony of sorrow. And she fell at Kate's feet, and grasped her dress, as though to detain her.

"There, there, this is all childishness, Molly. You will displease me if you go on so. Was that thunder I heard?"

As she asked, a knock came to the door, and the captain of the boat's crew, Tim Hennesy, put in his head. "If you are bent on goin', miss, the tide is on the turn, and there's no time to lose."

"You're a hard man to ask her, Tim Hennesy," said the woman, rising, and speaking with a fiery vehemence. "You're a hard man, after losing your own brother at sea, to take her out in weather like this."

Kate gave a hurried look over the room, and then, as if not trusting her control over her feelings, she went quietly out, and hastened down to the shore.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost, and all the efforts of the sailors were barely enough to save the small boat that lay next the pier from being crushed against the rocks with each breaking wave.

"Get on board, miss; now's the moment!" cried one of the men. And, just as he spoke, she made a bold spring and lighted safely in the stern.

The strong arms strained to the oars, and in a few seconds they were on board the yawl. The last few turns of the capstan were needed to raise the anchor, and now the jib was set to "pay her head round," and amidst a perfect shower of spray as the craft swung "about," the mainsail was hoisted, and they were away.

"What's the signal flying from the tower for?" said one of the sailors. And he pointed to a strip of dark-coloured bunting that now floated from the flagstaff.

"That's his honour's way of bidding us good-bye," said Hennesy. "I've never seen it these twelve years."

"How can we answer it, Tim?" said Kate, eagerly.

"We'll show him his own colours, miss," said the man. And, knotting the Luttrel flag on the halyard, he hoisted it in a moment. "Ay, he sees it now. Down comes his own ensign now to tell us that we're answered."

"Was it to say good-bye, or was it to recall her?—was it a last greeting of love and affection, or was it a word of scorn?" Such were Kate's musings as the craft heaved and worked in the strong sea, while the waves broke on the bow, and scattered great sheets of water over them.

"I wish there was a dry spot to shelter you, miss," said Tim, as he saw the poor girl shivering and dripping from head to foot. "But it's worse now than farther out; the squalls are stronger here under the land."

"Ay; but we'll have a heavier sea outside," said another, who would willingly have seen her change her mind even now, and return to the island.

"It's a fine wind for America, if that was where we were going," said a third, laughingly.

Kate smiled; she had almost said, "It matters little to me where;" but she caught herself, and was silent. Hour after hour went over, and they seemed—to her, at least—to have made no way whatever, for there rose the great mountain-peaks; the well-known cliffs of Arran frowned down dark and sullen, just as when they had left the harbour. She could count one by one the lights along the bay, and knew each cabin they belonged to: and there, high up, shone out a lonely star from the tower of St. Finbar, bringing back to her mind the solitary watcher who sat to sorrow over her desertion. The night at last fell, but the wind increased, and so rough was the sea that she was forced to take shelter in the bottom of the boat, where they made shift to cover her with a coarse canopy of tarpaulin.

Like some dreadful dream drawn out to the length of years, the hours of that night went over. The howling storm, the thundering crash of the sea, and at times a quivering motion in the craft, as though her timbers were about to part, and more even than these, the wild voices of the men, obliged to shout that they might be heard amongst the din, made up a mass of horrors that appalled her. Sometimes the danger seemed imminent, for to the loud words and cries of the men a sudden silence would succeed, while floods of water would pour over the sides, and threaten them with instant drowning. The agony she pictured to herself of a last struggle for life was more terrible far than her fear of death; and yet, through all these, came the thought: "Might it not be better thus? Should I not have left to the few who knew me dearer, fonder memories, than my life, if I am yet to live, will bequeath?" Worn out by these anxieties, and exhausted too, she fell into a deep sleep —so deep, that all the warring noises of the storm never awoke her; nor was she conscious that a new morning had dawned, and a bright noon followed it, as the launch entered the bay of Westport, and beat up for the harbour.

When Hennesy awoke her, to say that they were close in to shore, she neither could collect herself nor answer him; benumbed with cold and wet, she could barely muster strength to arise, and sit down in the stern-sheets.

"That's the spire of the town, miss, under the hill there."

"It was a wild night, Tim?" said she, inquiringly.

"I have seen as rough a sea, but I never was out in a stronger gale."

"Mind that you tell my uncle so when you get back; and be sure to say that I bore it well."

"Why wouldn't I? The sorrow a word ever crossed your lips. No man ever was braver."

"That's true," muttered the others.

"Get me a piece of bread out of that basket, Tim; and don't forget to tell my uncle how I ate, and ate heartily."

CHAPTER LIII.

THE GAOL PARLOUR.

At the time of which our story treats, the old gaols of Ireland were very unlike those edifices which modern humanity has erected to be the safeguards of prisoners. They were small, confined, generally ruinous in condition, and always ill ventilated and dirty. So limited was the space, that all classification of crime was impossible, and, worse still, the untried prisoners were confined indiscriminately along with those whom the law had already sentenced, and who only awaited the hour of execution.

The extent of favour shown to those who were waiting for trial consisted in the privilege of seeing their legal advisers, or their friends, in a small cell used for such colloquies, and to which they succeeded by rotation, and for half an hour at a time. They whose means were unequal to the cost of a legal defence, or whose friends took little trouble in their behalf, were occasionally not unwilling to sell this privilege to their luckier companions, and a gill of whisky, or a few ounces of tobacco, were gladly accepted in lieu of a right that would have been profitless to claim.

As the day for trial grew nearer, the price of this privilege rose considerably. There were so many things the prisoner wanted to hear, or to tell, secrets he had kept for weeks long locked close in his breast, would now find vent; details that he had determined should go with him to the grave, he could no longer abstain from communicating. The agonies of feverish expectation, the sleepless nights—or worse, far worse, those dreamful ones—would have begun to tell upon the strongest and boldest; and spirits that a few weeks back would have seemed to defy every terror, now became fidgety and fretful, eager to hear what men said without, and how the newspapers talked of them.

While the assizes were distant, the prisoners gave themselves up, so far as their position permitted, to the habits and ways of their ordinary lives. Some brooded, some bullied, some looked steeped in a sort of stupid indifference, not caring for anything, or minding anything; others gave way to a jollity which, whether real or feigned, affected those around, and disposed them to scenes of riot and uproar. When, however, the time for trial drew nigh, all these signs merged into one pervading sentiment of intense anxiety, and nothing was said, nothing heard, but questions as to who were to be the judges—a point to which immense importance was attached—some supposed tendency to mercy or severity being ascribed to each in turn, and the characters of the Crown lawyers were discussed with a shrewdness that indicated how far less the debaters thought of the law itself than of the traits and tempers of those who were to administer it.

From the day that old Malone entered the gaol, his ascendancy was at once acknowledged. It was not merely that in the old man's character there were those features of steadfast determination and unswerving courage which the Irish of every class place at the top of all virtues, but he was, so to say, a sort of patriarchal law-breaker; he had twice stood in the dock under charge for the greatest of crimes, and five times had he braved the risk of transportation. If ever there seemed a charmed life, it was his. And though the Crown prosecutors were wont to regard him as one whose successive escapes were a sort of reflection on their skill, the juries who tried him could not divest themselves of a sympathy for the hardy old fellow, who, never daunted by danger, no sooner issued from one scrape than he was ready to involve himself in another.

Peter Malone was not only the hero of the gaol, he was the law adviser. Around him they gathered to tell their several cases, and consult him as to their likely issue. It was not merely that he was quick in detecting where a flaw or breakdown of evidence might be looked for, but he knew—and it was wonderful how well—the sort of testimony that would tell with a jury, and the class of witness which it would be advisable to produce, or to withhold, according to the character of the judge that presided. It would have doubtless been very damaging to this ascendancy of his if it got abroad that he himself, while distributing his counsels to this man, and his warnings to that, should be unprotected and undefended, and so the brave old fellow, locking up his sorrows in his own heart, never betrayed his friendlessness. On the contrary, he scrupulously maintained his privilege to "the Parlour," as it was called, and would, when his turn came, stalk away to the little cell, to sit down in his solitude, and think, with a swelling heart, over his comfortless fortune.

The turnkey alone knew his secret, and kept it loyally. Malone had been in his hands many times, and always conducted himself well, so that whenever the time came round for old Peter's visit to the Parlour, Mr. Meekins would call out from the door in an audible and imposing voice, "Here's Counsellor Fitzgibbon," or "Serjeant Taate," or some other equally well-known leader at the bar, "wants to speak to Peter Malone," and poor old Peter would get up from his seat, and smooth his hair, and adjust his neckcloth, and walk proudly away to hide his misery in the half-darkened cell, and rock himself to and fro in all the sorrow of his friendless and deserted fortune.

Terrible as the mockery was, it sustained him, for though the straw will not support the drowning man, it will feed his hope even in death, and smooth the last agony of the heart, whose sharpest pang is desertion.

When, therefore, Mr. Meekins, instead of the usual pompous announcement, simply called out, "Peter Malone, to the Parlour," without any intimation of a learned visitor awaiting him, the old man heard the words in amazement, and not without fear. Had his friend betrayed him? Had he divulged the little fraud, and exposed him to his fellows? Or had he—and this most probable—had he, as the real day of reckoning drew nigh, revolted at a deception which a few hours must unveil, and which, even to the heart that encouraged it, bore its own cruel punishment. "He knows that I'm only giving myself false hopes," muttered the old fellow, as with sunken head and downcast eyes he moved slowly away.

As the door of the little cell clanked behind him, the turnkey with scrupulous tenacity bolting the small portal on the outside as rigorously as though it were the last protection of the criminal, Peter sat down on a small stool, and buried his face between his hands. Never before had his fate seemed so dark and gloomy. The little fiction he loved to maintain withdrawn, all the intensity of his loneliness stood before him at once. "I may as well say it at once," muttered he, "when I go back, that Peter Malone has no friend in the wide world, not a man to speak a word for him, but must stand up in the dock and say, 'No counsel, my lord.'" As if the bitter moment of the humiliation had arrived, the old fellow rocked to and fro in his agony, and groaned bitterly.

What was that which broke the stillness? Was it a sigh, and then a sob? Was his mind wandering? Was the misery too much for his reason? He rubbed his eyes and looked up.

"Merciful Mother! Blessed Virgin! is it yourself is come to comfort me?" cried he, as he dropped on his knees, while the tears streamed down his hard and wrinkled cheeks. "Oh, Holy Mother! Tower of Ivory! do I see you there, or is my ould eyes deceivin' me?"

The heart-wrung prayer was addressed to a figure on which the solitary pane of a small window high up in the wall threw a ray of sunlight, so that the braided hair glowed like burnished gold, and the pale cheeks caught a slightly warm tint, less like life than like a beautiful picture.

"Don't you know me, grandfather? Don't you know your own dear Katey?" said she, moving slowly forward; and then, kneeling down in front of him, clasped him in her arms.

It was more than he could bear, and he heaved a heavy sigh, and rolled back against the wall.

It was long before he rallied; old age stands so near the last threshold, there is but little space to recover breath in; and when he did rally, he could not be sure that his mind was not astray, or that his sight was not deceiving him.

"Tell me something of long ago, darlin'! tell me something, that I'll know you are my own."

"Shall I tell you of the day I found the penny in the well, and you told me it was for good luck, and never to lose it? Do you remember, grandfather, how you bored a hole in it, and I used to wear it around my neck with a string?"

"I do, I do," cried he, as the tears came faster and faster; "and you lost it after all; didn't you lose it?"

"Yes; but, grandfather, I shall find others, and golden ones too."

"Tell me more about them times, or I won't believe you," cried he, half peevishly.

"I'll talk to you all the evening about them; I remember them all, dear old grandaddy."

"That's the word I wanted; that's it, my darlin'! the light of my ould eyes!" And he fell on her neck and sobbed aloud.

In his ecstasy and delight to weave the long past into the present, he forgot to ask her how she came there, and by what fortune she had remembered him. It was the old life in the mountains that filled his whole being. The wild cliffs and solitary lakes, dear to him by the thought of her who never left him, trotting beside him as he went, or cowering at his knee as he sat over the turf fire. So immersed was he in these memories, that though she talked on he heard nothing; he would look at her, and smile, and say, "God bless her," and then go back again to his own dreamy thoughts.

"I'm thinking we'll have to cut the oats, green as it is, Kitty," said he, after a long pause. "It's late in the year now, and there'll be no fine days."

She could not speak, but her lips trembled, and her heart felt as if it would burst.

"There's a lamb astray these two days," muttered he. "I hope the eagles hasn't got it; but I heard one screeching last night. Light the fire, any way, darlin', for it's cowld here."

With what art and patience and gentle forbearance did she labour to bring those erring faculties back, and fix them on the great reality that portended. It was long, indeed, before she succeeded. The old man loved to revel in the bygone life, wherein, with all its hardships, his fierce nature enjoyed such independence; and every now and then, after she had, as she hoped, centred his thoughts upon the approaching trial, he would break out into some wild triumph over an act of lawless daring, some insolent defiance he had hurled at the minions who were afraid to come and look for him in his mountain home.

At last she did manage to get him to speak of his present condition, and to give a narrative—it was none of the clearest—of his encounter with the sheriff's people. He made no attempt to screen himself, nor did he even pretend that he had not been the aggressor, but he insisted, and he believed, too, that he was perfectly justified in all he had done. His notion was that he was simply defending what was his own. The scrupulous regard the law observes towards him who is in possession, is not unfrequently translated by the impetuous intelligence of the Irish peasant into a bonâ fide and undeniable right. Malone reasoned in this way, and with this addition: "It's just as good for me to die in a fair fight as be starved and ruined."

How hard was Kate's task, to eke out means for a defence from such materials as this! Indeed, no indictment that ever was drawn could be more condemnatory than the man's own admissions. Still, she persisted in sifting the whole story over and over, till she had at least such a knowledge of the details as would enable her to confer with a lawyer and obtain his opinion.

"And who is to defind me, darlin'?" asked he, in the cheerful tone of a heart perfectly at ease.

"We have not fixed upon that yet. We are not quite sure," murmured she, as her racked brain beat and throbbed with intense thinking.

"I'd like to have Mr. O'Connell, Kate," said he, proudly. "It would warm my ould heart to hear how he'd give it to them, the scoundrels! that would turn a poor man out of his own, and send him to sleep under a ditch. There's not his like in all Ireland to lash a landlord. It's there he's at home."

"I must be going now, grandaddy."

"Going, acushla! And will you leave me?"

"I must, there's no help for it; they wouldn't let me stay here."

"Begorra!" cried he, wildly, "I forgot I was in gaol! May I never! if I didn't think I was at home again, and that we were only waiting for the boys to have our supper!"

"My poor old grandaddy," said she, stooping and kissing his forehead, "I'll come back to-morrow, and stay a long time with you. I have a great deal to say to you that I can't think of to-day. Here's a little basket, with something to eat, and some tobacco, too; the gaoler gave me leave to bring it in. And you'll drink my health to-night, grandaddy, won't you?"

"My darlin'—my own darlin', that I will! And where did you come from now—was it from England?"

"No, grandaddy. It was a long way off, but not from England."

"And who are you living with? Is it with that ould man in Wales?"

"No, not with him. I'll tell you all to-morrow."

"They tell me he's mighty rich."

She evidently had not heard his words, for she stood pressing her temples with both hands, and as if endeavouring to repress some severe pain.

"It's your head's aching, you darlin'!" said he, compassionately.

"Head and heart!" muttered she, drearily. "Good-bye, my dear old grandaddy—good-bye!" And, not able to control her emotion, she turned her face away.

"You'll have to call out through that gratin' before they'll open the door," said he, half sulkily. "You'd think we was all sentenced and condimned, the way they lock us up here! But I hear him coming now. You'll let her in to see me to-morrow, Mr. Meekins, won't you?" said he, in an imploring tone. "She's my daughter's child, and nearly the last of us now."

"By my conscience, she's a fine creature!" said the turnkey, as she moved past. "It's mighty seldom the likes of her is seen in such a place as this!"

When Kate gained the street, the rain was falling heavily, and as she stood uncertain which way to turn, for the town was strange to her, O'Rorke came up.

"Haven't you as much as an umbrella, Miss Kate," said he, "or a cloak, in this dreadful weather?"

"I was not thinking of either. Which way do we go towards the inn?"

"I'd advise you to take shelter in a shop here, miss; the shower is too heavy to last long."

"I have no time for this; I want to catch the post, and I believe it leaves at six o'clock."

"You'll be drowned with this rain," muttered he. "But come along. I'll show you the way."

As they went, neither spoke; indeed, the noise of the plashing rain, and the sharp gusts of the sweeping wind, would have made it almost impossible to converse, and they plodded onward through the dreary and deserted streets, for even the poorest had now sought shelter. The inn was at the very end of a long straggling street, and, when they reached it, they were completely soaked through with rain.

"You have ordered a room for me here, you said?" asked Kate, as they entered.

"Yes, it's all ready, and your dinner too, whenever you like to eat it.—This is the young lady, ma'am," continued he, addressing the landlady, "that's coming to stop here; she's wet through, and I hope you'll take care of her, that she doesn't catch cold."

"Will you show me my room?" asked Kate, quietly. But the landlady never moved, but stood scrutinizing her with an eye the very reverse of kindly.

"She's asking you where's her room," broke in O'Rorke.

"I hear her, and I think this isn't the house for her."

"How do you mean?—what are you saying?" cried he, angrily.

"She'll be better and more at home at Tom M'Cafferty's, that's what I mean," said she, sturdily.

"But I took a room here."

"And you'll not get it," rejoined she, setting her arms akimbo; "and if you want to know why, maybe you'd hear it, and hear more than you like."

"Come away—come away; let us find out this other place, wherever it be," said Kate, hurriedly.

"The other place is down there, where you see the red sign," said the landlady, half pushing her, as she spoke, into the street.

Shivering with cold, and wet through, Kate reached the little "shebeen," or carrier's inn, where, however, they received her with kindness and civility, the woman giving up to her her own room, and doing her very best to wait on her and assist her. As her trunk had been forgotten at the inn, however, Kate had to wait till O'Rorke fetched it, and as Mr. O'Rorke took the opportunity of the visit to enter on a very strong discussion with the landlady for her insolent refusal to admit them, it was nigh an hour before he got back again.

By this time, what with the effects of cold and wet, and what with the intense anxieties of the morning, Kate's head began to ache violently, and frequent shiverings gave warning of the approach of fever. Her impatience, too, to be in time for the post became extreme. She wanted to write to her uncle; she was confident that, by a frank open statement of what she had done, and said, and seen, she could deprecate his anger. The few words in which she could describe her old grandfather's condition, would, she felt certain, move her uncle to thoughts of forgiveness. "Is he coming?—can you see him with my trunk? —why does he delay?" cried she at every instant. "No, no, don't talk to me of change of clothes; there is something else to be thought of first. What can it be that keeps him so long? Surely it is only a few steps away. At last!—at last!" exclaimed she, as she heard O'Rorke's voice in the passage. "There—there, do not delay me any longer. Give me that desk; I don't want the other. It is my desk, my writing-desk, I want. Leave me now, my good woman—leave me now to myself."

"But your shoes, miss; let me just take off your shoes. It will kill you to sit that way, dripping and wet through."

"I tell you I will not be dictated to!" cried she, wildly, for her face was now crimson with excitement, and her brain burning. "By what right do you come here into my room, and order me to do this or that? Do you know to whom you speak? I am a Luttrell of Arran. Ask him—that man below—if I am not speaking the truth. Is it not honour enough for your poor house that a Luttrell should stop here, but that you must command me, as if I were your servant? There—there, don't cry; I did not mean to be unkind! Oh! if you but knew how my poor head is aching, and what a heavy, heavy load I'm carrying here!" And she pressed her hand to her heart. And, with this, she fell upon her bed, and sobbed long and bitterly. At last she arose, and, assuring the hostess that after she had written a few lines she would do all that she asked her, she persuaded the kind-hearted woman to leave her, and sat down to the table to write. What she wrote, how she wrote, she knew not, but the words followed fast, and page after page lay before her as the clock struck six. "What!" cried she, opening her door, "is it too late for the post? I hear it striking six!"

"I'll take over myself to the office," said O'Rorke, "and by paying a trifle more they they'll take it in."

"Oh do! Lose no time, and I'll bless you for it!" said she, as she gave him the letter.

"Come up here and sit with me," said Kate to the woman of the house; and the honest creature gladly complied. "What a nice little place you have here!" said Kate, speaking with intense rapidity. "It is all so clean and so neat, and you seem so happy in it. Ain't you very happy?"

"Indeed, miss, I have no reason to be anything else."

"Yes; I knew it—I knew it!" broke in Kate, rapidly. "It is the striving to be something above their reach makes people unhappy. You never asked nor wished for better than this?"

"Never, miss. Indeed, it's better than ever I thought to be. I was the daughter of a poor labourin' man up at Belmullet, when my husband took me."

"What a dreary place Belmullet is! I saw it once," said Kate, half speaking to herself.

"Ah! you don't know how poor it is, miss! The like of *you* could never know what lives the people lead in them poor places with only the fishin' to look to, God help them! And when it's too rough to go to sea, as it often is for weeks long, there they are with nothing but one meal a day of wet potatoes, and nothing but water to drink."

"And *you* think I know nothing about all that!" cried Kate, wildly—"nothing of the rain pouring down through the wet thatch—nothing of the turf too wet to burn, and only smouldering and smoking, till it is better to creep under the boat that lies keel uppermost on the beach, than stay in the wretched hovel—nothing of the poor mother, with fever in one corner, and the child with small-pox in the other—nothing of the two or three strong men huddled together under the lee of the house, debating whether it wouldn't be better to go out to sea at any risk, and meet the worst that could happen, than sit down there to die of starvation?"

"In the name of the blessed Virgin, miss, who towld you all about that?"

"Oh, that I never knew worse! Oh, that I had never left it!" burst out Kate, as, kneeling down, she buried her head in the bed, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

The poor woman did her very best to console and comfort her, but Kate was unconscious of all her kindness, and only continued to mutter unceasingly to herself, till at last, worn out and exhausted, she leaned her head on the other's shoulder and fell off into a sort of disturbed sleep, broken by incessant starts.

CHAPTER LIV.

IN CONCLAVE.

When O'Rorke left Kate, it was not the direction of the post-office that he took; he went straight to the head inn of the town, on the door steps of which he stationed himself, anxiously watching for the arrival of another traveller. Nor had he long to wait, for as the town clock struck the half-hour, a chaise and pair galloped up to the door, and young Ladarelle cried out from the window, "The last seven miles in forty-six minutes! What do you say to that? Is dinner ready?" asked he, as he descended.

"Everything's ready, sir," said O'Rorke, obsequiously, as, pushing the landlord aside, he assumed the office of showing the way upstairs himself.

"Tell Morse to unpack some of that sherry," said Ladarelle; and then laughingly added, "Order your own tap, Master O'Rorke, for I'm not going to throw away Dalradern wine upon *you*."

O'Rorke laughed too—perhaps not as genially, but he could afford to relish such a small joke even against himself—not to say that it conveyed an assurance he was well pleased with, that Ladarelle meant him to dine along with himself.

As the dinner was served, Ladarelle talked away about everything. It was his first visit to Ireland, and though it amused him, he said he hoped his last also. Everything was absurd, laughable, and poverty-stricken to his eyes; that is to say, pauperism was so apparent on all sides, the whole business of life seemed to be carried on by make-shifts.

The patriot O'Rorke had need of much forbearance as he listened to the unfeeling comments and ignorant inferences of the "Saxon." He heard him, however, without one word of disclaimer, and with a little grin on his face, that if Ladarelle had been an Irishman, and had one drop of Irish blood in his body, he would not have accepted as any evidence of pleasure or satisfaction.

"Order whatever you mean to have," said Ladarelle, as the meal was concluded, "and don't let us have that fellow coming into the room every moment."

O'Rorke made his provision accordingly, and having secured a kettle, in case it should be his caprice to make punch, he bolted the door and resumed his place.

"There's your letter!" said Ladarelle, throwing a coarse-looking scrawl, sealed with green wax, on the table; "and I'll be shot if I understand one line of it!"

"And why not?" asked the other, angrily. "Is it the writing's so bad?"

"No; the writing can be made out. I don't complain of that. It's your blessed style that floors me! Now, for instance, what does this mean?—'Impelled by the exuberant indignation that in the Celtic heart rises to the height of the grandest sacrifices, whether on the altars——'"

O'Rorke snatched the letter from his hand, crushed it into a ball, and threw it into the fire. "You'll not have it to laugh at another time," cried he, sternly, and with a stare so full of defiance that Ladarelle looked at him for some seconds in amazement, without speaking.

"My good friend," said he, at last, with a calm, measured voice, "it is something new to me to meet conduct like this."

"Not a bit newer or stranger than for *me* to be laughed at. Bigger and stronger fellows than you never tried that game with me."

"I certainly never suspected you would take it so ill. I thought if any one knew what a joke meant, it was an Irishman."

"And so he does; none better. The mistake was, you thought an Englishman knew how to make one."

"Let there be an end of this," said Ladarelle, haughtily. "If I had kept you in your proper place, you would never have forgotten yourself!" And as he spoke, he flung his cigar into the fire, and arose and walked up and down the room.

O'Rorke hung his head for a moment, and then, in a tone of almost abject contrition, said, "I ask your pardon, sir. It was just as you say; my head was turned by good treatment."

If Ladarelle had been a physiognomist he would not have liked the expression of the other's face, the hue of utter sickness in the cheek, while the eyes flashed with a fiery energy; but he noted none of these, and merely said, as he resumed his place,—

"Don't let it happen again, that's all. Tell me now what occurred when you got back to Westport, for the only thing I know is that you met her there the morning you arrived."

"I'll tell it in three words. She was on the quay, just come after a severe night at sea, when I was trying to make a bargain with a fisherman to take me over to the island. I didn't see her till her hand was on my arm and her lips close to my ear, as she whispered,—

"'What news have you for me?'

"'Bad news,' says I; 'the sorrow worse.'

"She staggered back, and sat down on the stock of an anchor that was there, and drew the tail of her cloak over her face, and that's the way she remained for about a quarter of an hour.

"'Tell it to me now, Mr. O'Rorke,' said she; 'and as you hope to see glory, tell me the truth, and nothing more.'

"'It's little I have to tell,' says I, sitting down beside her. 'The ould man was out on a terrace when I gave him your letter. He took it this way, turning it all round, and then looking up at me, he says: "I know this handwriting," says he, "and I think I know what's inside of it, but you may tell her it's too late." He then muttered something about a sea-bathing place abroad that I couldn't catch, and he went on: "She didn't know when she was well——"'

"'No, no, that he never said!' says she, bursting in—'that he never said!'

"'Not in them words,' says I, 'certainly not, but it came to the same, for he said she used to be as happy here as the day was long!'

"'True; it was all true,' said she to herself. 'Go on.'

"'"Go back," says he, "and say, that sorry as I was at first, I'm getting over it now, and it wouldn't be better for either of us to hold any more correspondence." And with that he gave me the letter back, sealed as it was.'"

"What made you say that?" cried Ladarelle.

"Because I knew she'd never ask for it; or if she did, I'd say, 'I had it in my trunk at home.' The first thing was to get her to believe me, at any cost."

"Is *that* her way?" asked the other, thoughtfully.

"That's her way. She's not given to have suspicions, you can see that. If you talk to her straight ahead, and never break down in what you say, she'll look at you openly, and believe it all; but if ever she sees you stop, or look confused, or if she catches you taking a sly look at her under the eyes, you're done—done entirely! The devil a lawyer from this to Dublin would put you through such a cross-examination; and I defy the cleverest fellow that ever sat in the witness-box to baffle her. And she begins quite regular—quiet, soft, and smooth as a cat."

"What do I care for all this? She may be as shrewd as she pleases this day fortnight, Master O'Rorke. Let us only have the balls our own, and we'll win the game before she gets a hazard."

This illustration from the billiard-table was not fully intelligible to O'Rorke, but he saw its drift, and he assented.

"Where was I? Oh, I remember. 'He gave me the letter back,' says I, 'and told the servants to see I had my supper, and everything I wanted.

"'He did this with his hand, as much as to say, "You may go away;" but I made as if I didn't understand him, and I waited till the servant left the place, and then I drew near him, and said:—

"'"I think," says I, "it would be better your honour read the letter, anyhow. Maybe there's something in it that you don't suspect."

"'"Who are you," says he, "that's teaching *me* manners?"

"'I didn't say them was his words, but something that meant the same.

"'"I know every line that's in it. I know far better than you—ay, or than she suspects—the game she would play."'"

"She gave a little cry, as if something stung her. Indeed, I asked her, What was it hurt her? But she never answered me, but stood up straight, and, with a hand up this way, she said something to herself, as if she was making a vow or taking an oath. After that, it wasn't much she minded one word I said, and lucky for me it was, for I was coming to the hard part of my story—about your honour; how you heard from the servants that I was in the house, and sent for me to your own room, and asked me hundreds of questions about her. Where she was, and who with, and what she wrote about, and then how angry you grew with your uncle—I called him your uncle, I don't know why—and how you said he was an unfeeling old savage, that it was the same way he treated yourself, pampering you one day, turning you out of doors the next. 'And at last,' says I—'I couldn't keep it in any longer—I up and told him what I came about, and that your letter was asking a trifle of money to defend your grandfather for his life.'

"Sorrow matter what I said, she never listened to me. I told her you swore that her grandfather should have the first lawyer in the land, and that you'd come over yourself to the assizes. I told her how you put twenty pounds into my hand, and said, 'Tim'—no, not Tim—'Mr. O'Rorke, there's a few pounds to begin. Go back and tell Miss Kate she has a better and truer friend than the one she lost; one that never forgot the first evening he seen her, and would give his heart's blood to save her.'

"She gave a little smile—it was almost a laugh once—and I thought she was pleased at what I was telling her. Not a bit of it. It was something about the ould man was in her mind, and something that didn't mean any good to him either, for she said, 'He shall rue it yet.' And after that, though I talked for an hour, she never minded me no more than them fireirons! At last she clutched my arm in her fingers, and said:—

"'Do you know that my uncle declares I am never to go back again? I came away against his will, and he swore that if I crossed the threshold to come here, I should never re-cross it again. Do you know,' says she, 'I have no home nor friend now in the whole world, and I don't know what's to become of me?'

"I tried to comfort her, and say that your honour would never see her in any distress; but she wasn't minding me, and only went on saying something about being back again; but whether it meant at the Castle, or over in Arran, or, as I once thought, back as a child, when she used to play in the caves along the sea-shore, I couldn't say, but she cried bitterly, and for the whole day never tasted bit or sup. We stopped at a small house outside the town, and I told them it was a young creature that lost her mother; and the next day she looked so ill and wasted, I was getting afraid she was going to have a fever; but she said she was strong enough, and asked me to bring her on here to the gaol, for she wanted to see her grandfather.

"It was only this morning, however, I got the order from the sub-sheriff; and indeed he wouldn't have given it but that he seen her out of the window, for in all her distress, and with her clothes wet and draggled, she's as beautiful a creature as ever walked."

"Why not marry her yourself, O'Rorke? By Jove you're head and ears in love already. I'll make you a handsome settlement, on my oath I will."

"There's two small objections, sir. First, there's another Mrs. O'Rorke, though I'm not quite sure where at the present sitting; and even if there wasn't, she wouldn't have me."

"I don't see that; and if it be only the bigamy you're afraid of, go off to Australia or America, and your first wife will never trace you."

O'Rorke shook his head, and to strengthen his determination perhaps, he mixed himself a strong tumbler of punch.

"And where are we now?" asked Ladarelle.

O'Rorke, perhaps, did not fully understand the question, for he looked at him inquiringly.

"I ask you where are we now? Don't you understand me?"

"We're pretty much where we were yesterday; that is, we're waiting to know what's to be done for the ould man in the gaol, and what your honour intends to do about"—he hesitated and stammered and at last said—"about the other business."

"Well it's the other business, as you neatly call it, Mr. O'Rorke, that interests me at present. Sir Within has written twice to Mr. Luttrell since you left the Castle. One of his letters I stopped before it reached the office, the other I suppose has come to hand."

"No fault of mine, if it has, sir," broke in O'Rorke, hastily, for he saw the displeasure in the other's look. "I was twice at the office at Westport, and there wasn't a line there for Mr. Luttrell. Did you read the other letter, sir?" added he, eagerly, after a moment's silence.

"I know what's in it," muttered Ladarelle, in confusion, for he was not quite inured to the baseness he had sunk to.

"And what is it, sir?"

"Just what I expected; that besotted old fool wants to marry her. He tells Mr. Luttrell, and tells it fairly enough, how the estate is settled, and he offers the largest settlement the entail will permit of; but he forgets to add that the same day he takes out his license to marry we'll move for a commission of lunacy. I have been eight weeks there lately, and not idle, I promise you. I have got plenty of evidence against him. How he goes into the room she occupied at the Castle, and has all her rings and bracelets laid out on the toilet-table, and candles lighted, as if she was coming to dress for dinner, and makes her maid wait there, telling her Madame is out on horseback, or she is in the garden, she'll be in presently. One day, too, he made us wait dinner for her till eight o'clock; and when at last the real state of the case broke on him, he had to get up and go to his room and Holmes, his man, told me that he sobbed the whole night through, like a child."

"And you think that all them will prove him mad?" asked O'Rorke, with a jeering laugh.

"Why not? If a man cannot understand that a person who has not been under his roof for six or eight months, and is some hundred miles away, may want candles in her dressing-room, and may come down any minute to dinner in that very house——"

"Oddity—eccentricity—want of memory—nothing more! There's never a jury in England would call a man mad for all that."

"You are a great lawyer, Mr. O'Rorke, but it is right to say you differ here from the Attorney-General."

"No great harm in that same—when he's in the wrong."

"I might possibly be rash enough to question your knowledge of law, but certainly I'll never dispute your modesty."

"My modesty is like any other part of me, and I didn't make myself; but I'll stick to this—that ould man is not mad, and nobody could make him out mad."

"Mr. Grenfell will not agree with you in that. He was over at the Castle the night I came away, and he saw the gardener carrying up three immense nosegays of flowers, for it was her birthday it seemed, however any one knew it, and Sir Within had ordered the band from Wrexham, to play under her window at nightfall; and as Mr. Grenfell said, 'That old gent's brain seems about as soft as his heart!' Not bad, was it?—his brain as soft as his heart!"

"He's no more mad than I am, and I don't care who says the contrary."

"Perhaps you speculate on being called as a witness to his sanity?" said Ladarelle, with a sneer.

"I do not, sir; but if I was I'd be a mighty troublesome one to the other side."

"What the deuce led us into this foolish discussion? As if it signified one rush to me whether he was to be thought the wisest sage or the greatest fool in Christendom. What *I* want, and what I am determined on, is that we are not to be dragged into Chancery, and made town talk of, because a cunning minx has turned an old rake's head. I'd be hunted by a set of hungry rascals of creditors to-morrow if the old man were to marry. There's not one of them that wouldn't believe that my chance of the estate was all 'up.'"

"There's sense in *that;* there is reason in what you say now," said O'Rorke.

"And that's not the worst of it, either," continued Ladarelle, who, like all weak men, accepted any flattery, even at the expense of the object he sought; "but my govenor would soon know how deep I am, and he'd cast me adrift. Not a pleasant prospect, Master O'Rorke, to a fellow who ought to succeed to about twelve thousand a year."

"Could he do it by law?"

"Some say one thing, some another; but this I know, that if my creditors get hold of me now, as the fox said, there would be very little running left in me when they'd done with me. But here's the short and the long of it. We must not let Sir Within marry, that's the first thing; and the second is, there would be no objection to any plan that will give him such a shock—he's just ready for a shock—that he wouldn't recover from, do you see it now?"

"I see it all, only I don't see how it's to be done."

"I wonder what you are here for, then?" asked the other, angrily. "I took you into my pay thinking I had a fellow with expedients at his fingers' ends; and, except to see you make objections, and discover obstacles, I'll be hanged if I know what you're good for."

"Go on, sir, go on," said O'Rorke, with a malicious grin.

"In one word what do you propose?" said Ladarelle, sternly.

"Here's what I propose, then," said O'Rorke, pushing the glasses and decanters from him, and planting his arms on the table in a sturdy fashion—"I propose, first of all, that you'll see Mr. Crowe, the attorney, and give him instructions to defend Malone, and get him the best bar on the circuit. She'll insist upon that, that's the first thing. The second is, that you come down to where she is, and tell her that when you heard of her trouble that you started off to help her and stand by her. I don't mean to say it will be an easy thing to get her to believe it, or even after she believes it to take advantage of it, for she is prouder than you think. Well, toss your head if you like, but you don't know her, nor them she comes from; but if you know how to make her think that by what she'll do she'll spite the ould man that insulted her, if you could just persuade her that there wasn't another way in life so sure to break his heart, I think she'd comply, and agree to marry you."

"Upon my soul, the condescension overcomes me! You think—you actually think—she'd consent to be the wife of a man in such a position as mine!"

"Well, as I said a while ago, it wouldn't be easy."

"You don't seem to know, my good friend, that you are immensely impertinent!"

"I do not," was the reply, and he gave it calmly and slowly. At the same instant a knock came to the door, and the waiter motioned to O'Rorke that a woman wanted to speak to him outside. "I'm wanted for a few minutes, sir, down at the place she's stopping. The woman says she's very ill, and wandering in her mind. I'll be back presently."

"Well, don't delay too long. I'm between two minds already whether I'll not go back and give up the whole business."

CHAPTER LV.

STILL CONSPIRING.

"SHE'S worse, sir," whispered the woman, as she crossed the threshold of her door, and exchanged a word with her daughter. "Biddy says she's clean out of her mind now—listen to that! The Lord have mercy on us!"

It was a wild scream rang through the house, followed by a burst of fearful laughter.

"Ask her if she'll see me," said O'Rorke, in a low voice.

"That's O'Rorke's voice!" Kate cried out from the top of the stairs. "Let him come up. I want to see him. Come up!" She leaned over the railing of the stairs as she spoke, and even O'Rorke was horror-struck at the ashy paleness of her face, and a fearful brilliancy that shone in her eyes. "It's a very humble place, Mr. O'Rorke, I am obliged to receive you in," said she with a strange smile, as he entered; "but I have only just arrived here, you see I have not even changed my dress; pray sit down, if you can find a chair; all is in disorder here—and, would you believe it?"—here her manner became suddenly earnest, and her voice dropped to a whisper—"would you believe it? my maid has never come to me, never asked me if I wanted her since I came. It's getting dark, too, and must be late."

"Listen to me, now, Miss Kate," said he, with a touch almost of pity in his voice, "listen to me. You're not well, you're tired and exhausted, so I'll send the woman of the house to you, and get to bed, and I'll find out a doctor to order you something."

"Yes, I should like to see a doctor! that kind person I saw before, Sir Henry something—what was it? You will see it in the Court Guide—he attends the Queen."

"To be sure, to be sure, we'll have the man that attends the

Queen!" said he, giving his concurrence to what he imagined to be the fancy of an erring brain.

"And if he should ask why I am here," added she, in a whisper, "make out some sort of excuse, but don't mention my grandfather; these fashionable physicians are such snobs, they cannot abide visiting any but great folk. Isn't it true?"

"Yes, dear, it is true," said he, still humouring her.

"The fact is," said she, in a low, confiding voice, "I may confess it to you, but the fact is, I don't well know why I am here myself! I suppose Sir Within knows—perhaps my uncle may." And in her vague, meaningless look might now be seen how purposeless and unguided were all her speculations. "There, go now, and send my maid to me. Tell Coles, as you pass down, he may put up the horses. I'll not ride this evening. Do you know, I feel—it is a silly fancy, I suppose—but I feel ill; not actually ill so much as odd."

He cast one glance, not without compassion, on her, and went out.

"There's a young woman above stairs mighty like 'in' for a fever," said he to the hostess. "Get a doctor to see her as soon as you can, and I'll be back soon to hear what he says."

While the woman of the house, with all that kindliness which attaches to her class and nation, busied herself in cares for Kate, O'Rorke hastily made his way back to the inn.

"What is it? What called you away?" asked Ladarelle, as he entered the room.

"She's out of her mind! that's what it is," said O'Rorke, as he sat down, doggedly, and filled out a bumper of sherry to rally his courage. "What with anxiety, and fatigue, and fretting, she couldn't bear up any more, and there she is, struck down by fever and raving."

"Poor thing!" said Ladarelle; but there was no pity in the tone, not a shade of feeling in his countenance; he said the words merely that he might say something.

"Yes, indeed! Ye may well say 'Poor thing!'" chimed in O'Rorke! "it wouldn't be easy to find a poorer!"

"Do you suspect the thing is serious?" said Ladarelle, with a deep interest in his manner. "Do you think her life's in danger?"

"I do."

"Do you really?" And now, through the anxiety in which he spoke, there pierced a trait of a most triumphant satisfaction; so palpable was it, that O'Rorke laid down the glass he had half raised to his lips, and stared at the speaker. "Don't mistake—don't misunderstand me!" blurted out Ladarelle, in confusion. "I wish the poor girl no ill. Why should I?"

"At any rate, you think it would be a good thing for *you!*" said O'Rorke, sternly.

"Well I must own I don't think it would be a bad one; that is I mean it would relieve me of a deal of anxiety, and save me no end of trouble."

"Just so!" said O'Rorke, who, leaning his head on his hand, addressed his thoughts to the very serious question of how all these things would affect himself. Nor did it take him long to see that from the hour Ladarelle ceased to need him, all their ties were broken, and that the fashionable young gentleman who now sat at table with him in all familiarity would not deem him fit company for his valet.

"This is the fifth time, Master O'Rorke, you have repeated the words, 'Just so!' Will you tell me what they refer to? What is it that is 'just so?"

"I was thinking of something," said O'Rorke.

"And what was it? Let us have the benefit of your profound reflections."

"Well, then, my profound reflections was telling me that if this girl was to die, your honour wouldn't be very long about cutting my acquaintance, and that, maybe, this is the last time I'd have the pleasure of saying, 'Will you pass me the wine?"

"What are you drinking? This is Madeira," said Ladarelle, as he pushed the decanter towards him, and affecting to mistake his meaning.

"No, sir; I'm drinking port wine," was the curt reply, for he saw the evasion, and resented it.

"As to that other matter—I mean as to 'cutting you,' O'Rorke —I don't see it—don't see it at all!"

"How do you mean, 'you don't see it?'"

"I mean it is not necessary."

"Isn't it likely?"

"No; certainly not."

"Isn't it possible, then?"

"Everything is possible in this world of debts and difficulties, but no gentleman ever thinks of throwing off the man that has stood to him in his hour of need. Is that enough?"

O'Rorke made no answer, and in the attitude of deep thought he assumed, and in his intense look of reflection, it was pretty plain that he did not deem the explanation all-sufficient. "Here's how it is, sir!" burst he out, suddenly. "If this girl dies, you won't want me; and if you won't *want* me, it's very unlikely the pleasure of my society will make you come after me; so that I'd like to understand how it's to be between us."

"I must say, my worthy friend, everything I have seen of you goes very far to refute the popular notion abroad about

Irish improvidence; for a man so careful of himself under every contingency—one who looked to his own interests in all aspects and with all casualties—I never met before."

"Well, sir, you meet him now. He is here before you; and what do you say to him?" said O'Rorke, with a cool audacity that was actually startling.

It was very probably fortunate for both of them, so far as their present good relations were concerned, that an interruption took place to their colloquy in the shape of a sharp knock at the door. It was a person wanted to see Mr. O'Rorke.

"Mr. O'Rorke's in request to-night," said Ladarelle, mockingly, as the other left the room.

"Are you the friend of that young lady, sir, that's down at M'Cafferty's?"

"Yes, I'm her friend," was the dry answer.

"Then I've come to tell you she's going fast into a fever—a brain fever, too."

"That's bad!" muttered O'Rorke below his breath.

"One ought to know something about her—whence she came, and how she came. There are symptoms that ought to be traced to their causes, for she raves away about people and things the most opposite and unlike——"

"Are you able to cure her? that's the question," said O'Rorke.

"No doctor could ever promise that much yet."

"I thought as much," said O'Rorke, with an insolent toss of his head.

"I am willing to do my best," said the doctor, not noticing the offensive gesture; "and if you want other advice, there's Doctor Rogan of Westport can be had easy enough."

"Send for him, then, and hold a consultation; her life is of consequence, mind that!"

"I may as well tell you that Doctor Rogan will require to know what may lead him to a history of her case, and he won't treat her if there's to be any mystery about it."

O'Rorke's eyes flashed, as if an insolent answer was on his lips, and then, as quickly controlling himself, said, "Go and have your consultation, and then come back here to me; but mind you ask for me—Mr. O'Rorke—and don't speak to any one else than myself."

The doctor took his leave, and O'Rorke, instead of returning to the room, slowly descended the stairs and strolled out into the street.

It was night; there were few about; and he had ample opportunity for a quiet commune with himself, and that species of "audit" in which a man strikes the balance of all that may be *pro* or *contra* in any line of action. He knew well he was on dangerous ground with Ladarelle. It needed not an intelligence sharp as his own to show that a deep mistrust existed between them, and that each only waited for an opportunity to shake himself free of the other. "If I was to go over to the old man and tell him the whole plot, I wonder how it would be?" muttered he to himself. "I wonder would he trust me? and, if he was to trust me, how would he pay me? that's the question—how would he pay me?" The quick tread of feet behind him made him turn at this moment. It was the waiter of the inn coming to tell him that the post had just brought two letters to the gentleman he had dined with, and he wished to see him at once.

"Shut the door—turn the key in it," said Ladarelle, as O'Rorke entered. "Here's something has just come by the mail. I knew you'd blunder about those letters," added he, angrily; "one has reached Luttrell already, and, for aught I know, another may have come to hand since this was written. There, there, what's the use of your excuses. You promised me the thing should be done, and it was not done. It does not signify a brass farthing to me to know why. You're very vain of your Irish craft and readiness, and yet I tell you, if I had entrusted this to my fellow Fisk, cockney as he is, I'd not have been disappointed."

"Very like," said O'Rorke, sullenly. "He's more used to dirty work than I am."

Ladarelle had just begun to run his eyes over one of the letters when he heard these words, and the paper shook in his hand with passion, and the colour came and went in his face, but he still affected to read on, and never took his gaze from the letter. At last he said, in a shaken voice, which all his efforts could not render calm, "This is a few lines from Fisk, enclosing a letter from Luttrell for Sir Within. Fisk secured it before it reached its destination."

To this insinuated rebuke O'Rorke made no rejoinder, and, after a pause, the other continued: "Fisk says little, but it is all to the purpose. He has reduced every day to a few lines in journal fashion, so that I know what goes on at Dalradern as if I were there myself."

O'Rorke kept an unbroken silence, and Ladarelle went on: "The day you left the Castle, Sir Within wrote to Calvert and Mills, his solicitors, and despatched by post a mass of documents and parchments. The next day he wrote to Mr. Luttrell of Arran, posting the letter himself as he drove through Wrexham."

"That letter was the one I stopped at Westport," broke in O'Rorke.

"I suppose it was. Fisk writes: 'The servants all remarked a wonderful change had come over Sir W.; he gave orders through the house as if he expected company, and seemed in such spirits as he had not been for months. Next morning very anxious for the post to come in, and greatly disappointed at not seeing some letter he expected. The late post brought a letter from Mills to say he would be down by the morning's mail—that the matter presented no difficulty whatever, and was exactly as Sir Within represented it.' Fisk managed to read this and re-seal it before it got to hand; that's what I call a smart scoundrel!"

"So he is—every inch of one!" was O'Rorke's rejoinder.

"Here he continues," said Ladarelle: "'Thursday—No letter, nor any tidings of Mills. Sir Within greatly agitated. Post horses ordered for Chester, and countermanded. All sorts of contradictory commands given during the day. The upholsterers have arrived from town, but told not to take down the hangings, nor do anything till to-morrow. Mr. Grenfell called, but not admitted; a message sent after him to ask him to dinner to-morrow; he comes. Friday—arrived at Wrexham. As the mail came in, saw Mr. Mills order horses for Dalradern; waited for the post delivery, and secured the enclosed. No time for more, as the Irish mail leaves in an hour."

"Now for Luttrell. Let's see his side in the correspondence," said Ladarelle, breaking the seal; "though, perhaps, I know it as well as if I read it."

"You do not," said the other, sturdily.

"What do you mean by 'I do not?'"

"I suspect I know what you're thinking of; and it's just this—that John Luttrell is out of himself with joy because that old fool's in love with his niece."

"He might well be what you call out of himself with joy if he thought she was to be mistress of Dalradern."

"It's much you know him," said O'Rorke, with an insolent mockery in his voice and look. "A Luttrell of Arran wouldn't think a prince of the blood too good for one belonging to him. Laugh away, laugh away; it's safe to do it here, for John Luttrell's on the island beyand."

"You are about the most——"

"The most what? Say it out. Surely you ain't afraid to finish your sentence, sir!"

"I find it very hard, Mr. O'Rorke, to conduct an affair to its end in conjunction with one who never omits an occasion to say, or at least insinuate, a rudeness."

"Devil a bit of insinuation about *me*. Whatever I have to say, I say it out, in the first words that come to me; and I'm generally pretty intelligible too. And now, if it's the same thing to you, what was it you were going to call me? I was the most—something or other—what was it?"

"I'll tell you what *I* am," said Ladarelle, with a bitter grin—"about the most patient man that ever breathed."

Neither spoke for some time, and then Ladarelle opened the letter he still held in his hand, and began to read it.

"Well," cried he, "of all the writing I ever encountered, this is the most illegible; and not merely that, but there are words erased and words omitted, and sentences left unfinished, or finished with a dash of the pen."

"Are you going to read it out?" asked O'Rorke; and in his voice there rang something almost like a command, for the man's native insolence grew stronger at every new conflict, and with the impression—well or ill-founded—that the other was afraid of him.

"I'll try what I can do," said Ladarelle, repressing his irritation. "It is dated St. Finbar's, 16th.

"'SIR,—I know nothing of your letter of the 12th instant. If I ever received, I have forgotten and mislaid it. I answered yours of the 9th, and hoped I had done with this correspondence. I have seen your name in the newspapers, and have been'—have been, I suppose it is—'accustomed'—yes, accustomed—'to look on you as a person in high employ, and worthy of the'—here the word is left out—'who employed him. If, however, you be, as you state, in your'—this may be a nine or seven, I suppose it is seven—'in your seventy-fourth year, your proposal to a girl of twenty is little short of——' Another lapse; I wish we had his word, it was evidently no compliment. 'That is, however, more your question than mine. Such follies as these ask for no comment; they usually—— And well it is it should be so.

"'Fortune, however, befriends you, more than your own foresight. It is your good luck rescues you from this—— She has left this—gone away—deserted *me*, as she once deserted *you*, and would in all likelihood when sorry insolent airs of your connections to resent unpardonable. Without you are as bereft as myself, you must surely have relations, of whom choice and certainly more suitable than one whose age and decrepitude might in pity and compassion sentiment.

"'But she is gone! Warning is, therefore, needless. You cannot if you would this folly. She is gone—and on a bed of sickness, to which the only hope and that speedily.

"'If by such hurt you.'"

Line after line had been here erased and re-written, but all illegibly; nor was it till after long puzzling and exploring, the last words could be made out to be: "'All further interchange of letters is a task beyond my strength. It is all said when I write, She is gone, no more to nor would I now—— A few hours more—I pray not days.

"'Faithful servant,

"'J. H. LUTTRELL.'

"It's clear *he*'ll have no more correspondence," said Ladarelle, with a half triumphant manner, as he closed the letter.

"And the other? What will the other do?"

"Do you mean Sir Within?"

"Yes."

"It's not easy to say. It seems plain we're not to expect anything very sensible from him. He is determined to make a fool of himself, and it only remains to see how he is to do it."

"And how do you think it will be?" In spite of himself, O'Rorke threw into his question that amount of eagerness that showed how much interest he felt in the matter. Ladarelle was quick enough to see this, and turned his eyes full upon him, and thus they stood for nigh half a minute, each steadfastly staring at the other. "Well! do you see anything very wonderful in my face that you look so hard at me?" asked O'Rorke.

"I do."

"And what is it, if I might make so bowld?"

"I see a man who doubts how far he'll go on the road he was paid to travel—that's what I see!"

"And do you know why?" rejoined O'Rorke, defiantly. "Do you know why?"

"No."

"Then *I*'ll tell you! It's because the man that was to show me the way hasn't the courage to do it! There's the whole of it. You brought me over here telling me one thing, and now you're bent on another! and to-morrow, if anything cheaper turns up, you'll be for *that*. Is it likely that I'd risk myself far with a man that doesn't know his mind, or trust his own courage?"

"I suppose I understand my own affairs best!"

"Well! that's what I think about *mine*, too."

Ladarelle took an impatient turn or two up and down the room before he spoke, and it was easy to see that he was exerting himself to the very utmost to be calm. "If this girl's flight from Arran has served us in one way, her illness has just done us as much harm in another—I mean, of course, if she should not die—because my venerable relation is just as much determined to marry her as ever he was. Are you attending to me?"

"To every word, sir," said O'Rorke, obsequiously; and, indeed, it was strangely like magnetism the effect produced upon him, when Ladarelle assumed the tone and manner of a superior.

"I want to have done with the business, then, at once," continued Ladarelle. "Find out from the doctor—and find it out accurately—what are her chances of life. If she is likely to live, learn how soon she could be removed from this, and whither to, as Sir Within is sure to trace her to this place. As soon as possible, we must manage some sort of mock marriage, for I believe it is the only sure way of stopping this old man in his folly. Now, I leave it to *you* to contrive the plan for this. There's another demand for you. See who is at the door."

"Mr. O'Rorke is wanted at M'Cafferty's," said a voice outside.

"I'll be back in a few minutes, sir."

"Well, I shall go to bed, and don't disturb me if there be nothing important to tell me. Order breakfast for ten tomorrow, and let me see you there."

O'Rorke bowed respectfully, and went out.

"I'd give fifty pounds to hear that you had broken your neck on the staircase!" muttered Ladarelle, as he saw the door close; "and I'd give a hundred had I never seen you!"

CHAPTER LVI.

A HEAVY BLOW.

In the grand old dining-room of Dalradern Castle, Sir Within was seated with his guest, Mr. Grenfell. The ample wood-fire on the hearth, the costly pictures on the walls, the table covered with decanters and flasks of various forms, the ample old chairs in which they lounged, suggested luxurious ease and enjoyment; and perhaps Grenfell, as he smoked his cigar, in accordance with the gracious permission of his host, *did* feel that it was a supreme moment of life; while certainly he, to whom all the precious appliances belonged, was ill at ease and uncomfortable, answering occasionally at random, and showing in many ways that his mind was deeply and far from pleasantly preoccupied.

Grenfell had been some days at the Castle, and liked his quarters. There were, it is true, many things he wished changed; some of them, he fancied, could be altered by a little adroit diplomacy with the butler and the housekeeper, and other heads of departments; others, of a more serious kind, he reserved to be dealt with when the time should come that he would be regarded in that house as little less than a master. He had weighed the matter carefully with himself, and determined that it was better to stand by Sir Within, old as he was, than to depend on the friendship of young Ladarelle, whose innate vulgarity would have made all companionship irksome, and whose inveterate obstinacy would have made guidance impossible.

The house had, indeed, great capabilities, and, with Sir Within's means, might be made all that one could wish for. With the smallest imaginable addition to the household, thirty, ay, forty guests could be easily accommodated, and he, Grenfell, knew of such delightful people—such charming people—who would be in ecstasies to stop at a house where was no mistress, where no return civilities were wanted, where each guest might be a law to himself as to his mode of life, and where the cellar was immaculate, and the cook better than at the Travellers'.

"If I could only get him out of this stupid isolation—if I could persuade him that all England is not like a Welsh county, and that this demure neighbourhood, with its antiquated prudery, has no resemblance to the charming world of seductive sinners I could bring around him, what a victory it would be!" To this end the first grand requisite was, that the old man should not marry. "If he marry," argued Grenfell, "he will be so deplorably in love, that what between his passion and his jealousy, he'll shut up the house, and nothing younger than the old French abbé will ever cross the threshold."

Now Grenfell had not of late kept up any relations of intercourse with Ladarelle; indeed, in his life in town, he had avoided intimacy with one all of whose associates were evidently taken from the lowest ranks of the turf, andthe slang set of second-rate theatres. Grenfell could not, consequently, know what plan of campaign this promising young gentleman was following out; but when he learned that it was quite suddenly he had quitted the Castle, and that his servant, Mr. Fisk, had been left behind, he very soon established such a watch on the accomplished valet's movements as satisfied him that he was there on duty as a spy, and that his daily visits to the post-office signified how industriously he despatched his intelligence. At first, Grenfell was disposed to make advances to Fisk, and win his confidence —a task not difficult to one whose whole life had been a series of such seductions; but he subsequently thought it might be better to hold himself quite aloof from all intercourse with the younger branch, and stand firmly by the head of the dynasty. "If Ladarelle be really gone after this girl, to marry her, or to run off with her, it matters not which, he is playing *my* game. All I ask is, that Sir Within be not the bridegroom. If the shock of the disaster should not overwhelm him, there is nothing else to be dreaded." There, indeed, lay the great peril; nor was Grenfell a man to undervalue it. In his contempt for all emotions, he naturally ascribed their strongest influences to those whose age had weakened their faculties and impaired their judgments. Love was a folly with the young; but with the old, it was the stupidest of all infatuations, and the reckless way in which an old man would resign fortune, station, and the whole world's opinion on such an issue, was, to *his* thinking, the strongest possible evidence of second childhood.

"If I could make him feel the ridiculous part of the calamity, he would gain courage to brave the disaster," thought he. And while he thus thought he smoked on in silence, neither uttering a word.

"Nine o'clock!" said Sir Within, as he counted the strokes of the timepiece. "Nine and the post not in!"

"How easily one takes the delay of the mail when 'the House' is up," said Grenfell, purposely saying what might possibly suggest some sort of dissent or opinion; but the old diplomatist had been too well schooled to fall into such indiscretion, and simply said, "It is true, we all hibernate when the autumn begins."

Grenfell saw that his shell had not exploded, and began to talk at random about how much pleasanter it was to have one's post of a morning—that letters should always come in with the eggs at breakfast—that people exchanged their gossip more genially then than at any other time; and, at last, arrived at what he sought to portray, the tableau of a charming party in a delightful country-house, "The best thing we have in England; and, indeed, the best thing the world has anywhere."

"I quite agree with you," said Sir Within, blandly. And he wiped the beautiful miniature of Marie Antoinette that adorned the lid of his snuff-box, and gazed with admiration at the lovely features.

"I fancy they know very little abroad of what we call country-house life?" half asked Grenfell.

"They have their gatherings at 'the château' in France; and in Italy they have their villeggiatura——Ah, there he comes; I hear the clank of the post-bag!" He caught himself quickly, and resumed: "I rather like the villeggiatura; there is not much trouble taken to entertain you, but you are free to dispose of yourself how you like. What has kept him so late, Fry?" said he, as the butler entered with the bag; "take it up to my room."

"Oh, let us hear who has won the Cantelupe!" said Grenfell. "I have backed Grimsby's horse, Black Ruin, at three to eight against the field."

"Here's the key, then," said Sir Within, with well feigned indifference.

As Grenfell emptied the contents of the bag on the table, a square-shaped, somewhat-heavy packet fell to the floor, at Sir Within's feet. The old man lifted it up and laid it on the table, but, on doing so, his hand trembled, and his colour changed.

"What about your race—has your horse won?" asked he, as Grenfell turned over the paper to find the sporting intelligence.

"Oh, here it is—a dead heat between Black Ruin and Attila. Why, he's Grimsby's also. 'Second heat, Attila walked over.' What a sell! I see there's a long letter about it from the correspondent; shall I read it for you!"

"By all means," said Sir Within, not sorry to give him any occupation at the moment that might screen himself from all scrutiny.

"'The long-expected match between Lord St. Dunstan's well-known Carib Chief and Mr. Grimsby's Black Ruin—for, in reality, the large field of outsiders, fourteen in number, might as well have been cantering over an American savannah—took place yesterday.'" He read on and on—the fluent commonplaces—about the course crowded with rank and fashion, amongst whom were noticed the usual celebrities of the turf, and was getting to the description of the scene at the weighing stand, when a dull, heavy sound startled him. He looked down, and saw that Sir Within had fallen from his chair to the floor, and lay stretched and motionless, with one arm across the fender.

Lifting him up, Grenfell carried him to a sofa. His face and forehead were crimson, and a strange sound came from the half-open lips, like a faint whistle. "This is apoplexy," muttered Grenfell; and he turned to ring the bell and summon aid, but, as he did so, he perceived that several papers lay on the floor. and the envelope of a recently-opened packet amongst them. "Ha, here is what has done it!" muttered he to himself; and he held a square shaped piece of coarse paper to the light and read the following, written in a bold, irregular hand,—

"'I, Paul O'Rafferty, P.P. of Drumcahill and Ardmorran, hereby certify that I have this day united in the bonds of holy matrimony, Adolphus Ladarelle, Esq., of Upper Portland Street, London, and the "Downs," in Herefordshire, to Kate Luttrell, niece and sole heiress of John Hamilton Luttrell, Esq., of Arran; and that the ceremony was duly performed according to the rights and usages of the Holy Catholic Church, and witnessed by those whose names are attached to this document.

" 'Jane M'Cafferty, her mark X.
" 'Timothy O'Rorke, of Cusha-ma-Creena.

" 'Given on this eighteenth of November, 18—.' "

Grenfell had not time to look at the other papers, for he heard a step in the corridor, and, thrusting them hastily into his pocket, he rang the bell violently, nor desisted till the door opened, and Mr. Fisk appeared.

"Call the people here—send for a doctor!" cried Grenfell. "Sir Within has been taken with a fit."

"A fit, sir! Indeed, how very dreadful," said Fisk; but who, instead of hurrying off to obey the order, walked deliberately over and stared at the sick man. "He'll not 'come round, sir, take my word for it, Mr. Grenfell. It's no use doing anything —it's all up."

"Go, send for a doctor, at once," said Grenfell, angrily.

"I assure you, sir, it's too late," said the impassive valet, as he left the room in the same slow and measured pace he had entered.

Several servants, however, rushed now to answer the bell, which Grenfell rang unceasingly, and by them Sir Within was carried to his room, while messengers were despatched in all directions for medical aid. Once alone in his own room, and with the door locked, Grenfell re-read the document which had caused the disaster. He was not one of those men who suffer from the pangs of conscience on ordinary occasions, but he had his misgivings here that a certain piece of counsel he had once given might just as well have been withheld. If the shock should kill the old man, it would defeat all that policy to which he had been of late devoting himself. Young Ladarelle would have learned from Fisk enough about his, Grenfell's, influence with Sir Within to shut the doors against him when he had succeeded to the estate. These were painful reflections, and made him think that very probably he had "been backing the wrong stable."

"Is the fellow really married?" muttered he, as he sat examining the paper. "This document does not seem to me very formal. It is not like the copy of a registry, and, if the marriage were duly solemnized, why is it not stated where it took place?"

He turned to the long letter which accompanied the certificate. It was from Ladarelle, half apologetically announcing his marriage, and stating that the intelligence could doubtless only prove gratifying to Sir Within, since the object of his choice had so long been the recipient of so many favours from Sir Within himself, and one whose gratitude had already cemented the ties of relationship which bound her to the family. It was long and commonplace throughout, and bore, to the keen eyes of him who read it, the evidence of being written to sustain a fraud.

"There has been no marriage," said Grenfell, as he closed the letter. "She has been duped and tricked, but how, and to what extent, I know not. If I were to send for Fisk, and tell him that I had just received this letter from his master the fellow might accord me his confidence, and tell me everything."

He rang the bell at once, but, when the servant answered the summons, he said that Mr. Fisk had left the Castle with post-horses, half an hour before, it was supposed for town.

Ladarelle's letter finished by saying, "We are off to Paris, where we remain, Hotel Grammont, Rue Royale, till the 30th; thence we shall probably go south—not quite certain where."

"No, no, there has been no marriage—not even a mock one. All these details are far too minute and circumstantial, and these messages of 'my dear wife' are all unreal. But what can it matter? If the old man should only rally, it is all for the best."

A knock came to the door. It was Doctor Price. "All is going on favourably. It was shock—only shock of the nervous system—nothing paralytic," said he; "and he is more concerned to know that his face was not bruised, nor his hands scratched, than anything else. He wishes to see you immediately."

"Is it quite prudent to go and talk to him just yet?"

"Better than render him irritable by refusing to see him. You will, of course, use your discretion on the topic you discuss with him."

Grenfell was soon at the sick man's bedside, none but themselves in the room.

"We are alone, are we?" asked Sir Within, faintly.

"Quite alone."

"Yates says there were no letters or papers to be found when he entered the room——"

"I placed them all in my pocket," interrupted Grenfell. "There were so many people about, and that fellow of young Ladarelle's too, that I thought it best not to leave anything at their mercy."

"It was very kind and very thoughtful. Where are they?"

"Here. I sealed them up in their own envelope."

The old man took the paper with a trembling hand, and placed it under his pillow. He had little doubt but that they had been read—his old experiences in diplomacy gave no credit to any sense of honour on this head—but he said not a word of this.

"Adolphus has married the girl you saw here—my ward, he used to call her," said he, in a low whisper.

"Indeed! Is it a good match? Has she fortune?"

"Not a shilling. Neither fortune nor family."

"Then you are not pleased with the connection?"

Sir Within drew a long sigh, and said, "It is no affair of mine. His father will, perhaps, not like it."

"How did it come about? Where did it take place?"

"Nothing—nothing but misery before her?" muttered the old man, unheeding his question.

"Do you think he will treat her ill?"

"A life of sorrow—of sorrow and shame!" murmured he, still lower. "Poor girl—poor unhappy girl!"

Grenfell was silent, and the other, after a pause, went on,—

"His father is sure to be displeased; he is a violent man, too, and one can't say to what lengths temper may carry him. And all this will fall upon *her!*"

"Do you think so?"

"I know him well!" He mused for several minutes, and then said to himself: "I could not—I could not—not for worlds!" And then aloud; "But I could leave this—leave the Castle, and let them come here. How she loved it once! Oh, if you knew how happy she was here!" He covered his face with his hands, and lay thus a considerable time.

"And do you mean to invite them here?" asked Grenfell at last.

"You can write it for me," said he, still pursuing his own train of thought. "You can tell him that, not being well—having some difficulty in holding a pen—I have begged of you to say that the Castle is at their disposal—that I mean to leave this—where shall I say for? -to leave this for the south of France, or Italy."

"Are you equal to such a journey? Have you strength for it?"

"Far more than to stay here and meet her—*them*—meet *them*," added he, almost peevishly. "I have not health nor spirits for seeing company, and of course people will call, and there will be dinners and receptions—all things I am unfit for. Say this for me, dear Mr. Grenfell, and tell Yates that I mean to go up to town to-morrow."

Grenfell shook his head to imply dissent, but the other resumed,—

"If you knew me better, sir, you would know that my energy never failed me when I called upon it. I have been tried pretty sorely once or twice in life, and yet no disaster has found me faint-hearted!" As he spoke, a gleam of pride lighted up his features, and he looked all that he thought himself. "Will you take this key of the gem-room," said he, after a pause; "and in the second drawer of the large ebony cabinet you will find a green morocco-case; it has my mother's name on it, Oliver Trevor. Do me the favour to bring it to me. This was a wedding present some eighty years ago, Mr. Grenfell," said he, as he unclasped the casket that the other placed in his hands. "It was the fashion of those days to set gems on either side, and here you have emeralds, and here are opals. Ladies were wont to turn their necklaces in the course of an entertainment; they are content with less costly changes now: they merely change their affections." He tried to smile, but his lips trembled, and his voice all but failed him.

"It is very magnificent!" exclaimed Grenfell, who was truly surprised at the splendour of the jewels.

"The Margravine of Anhalt's present to my mother, sir!" As the glow of pride the recollection imparted to his face faded away, a sickly pallor succeeded, and, in a tone of broken and difficult utterance, he said: "Be kind enough to place this in an envelope, seal it with my arms, and address it, 'Mrs. A. Ladarelle, de la part de W. W.' That will be quite sufficient."

"They are splendid stones!" said Grenfell, who seemed never to weary of his admiration.

"They will become her, sir, and *she* will become *them!*" said the old man, with an immense effort to seem calm and collected. "I believe," said he at last, with a faint smile, "I am overtaxing this poor strength of mine. Price warned me to be careful. Will you forgive me if I ask you to leave me to my own sorry company? You'll come back in the evening, won't you? Thanks—my best thanks!" And he smiled his most gracious smile, and made a little familiar gesture with his hand; and then as the door closed, and he felt that none saw him, he turned his face to the pillow and sobbed—sobbed convulsively.

Although Grenfell had acceded to Sir Within's request to write the invitation to Ladarelle, he secretly determined that he would not commit himself to the step without previously ascertaining if the marriage had really taken place, because, as he said to himself, this young fellow must never get it into his head that he has deceived such a man as me. He therefore wrote a short, half jocular note, addressed to Ladarelle at his club in town, saying that he had read his letter to Sir Within, and was not one-half so much overcome by the tidings as his respected relative. "In fact," said he, "I have arrived at that time of life in which men believe very little of what they hear, and attach even less of importance to that little. At all events, Sir Within will not remain here; he means to go abroad at once, and Dalradern will soon be at your disposal, either to pass your honeymoon, or rejoice over your bachelor freedom in, and I offer myself as your guest under either casualty." "The answer will show me," muttered he, "what are to be our future relations towards each other. And now for a good sleep, as befits a man with an easy conscience."

CHAPTER LVII.

THE HOME OF SORROW.

It was six weeks after the events in which we last saw Kate Luttrell that she was sufficiently able to rise from her sick-bed, and sit at the little window of her room. She was wan, and worn, and wasted, her eyes deep sunken, and her cheeks hollow. Beautiful was she still in all the delicate outline of her features, the finely-rounded nostril and gracefully-turned chin almost gaining by the absence of the brilliant colouring which had at one time, in a measure, absorbed all the admiration of her loveliness. Her long luxuriant hair—spared by a sort of pity by her doctor, who, in his despair of rescuing her from her fever, yielded to her raving entreaties not to cut it off—this now fell in wavy masses over her neck and shoulders, and in its golden richness rendering her pale face the semblance of marble. Each day had the doctor revealed to her some detail of what had happened during her illness: how she had been "given over," and received the last rites of the Church; how, after this, one who called himself her brother had arrived, and insisted on seeing her; how he came with the man named O'Rorke and the priest O'Rafferty, and remained a few seconds in her room, and left, never to return again; indeed, all three of them had left the town within an hour after their visit.

She heard all this in mute amazement, nor even was she certain that her faculties yet served her aright, so strange and incomprehensible was it all. Yet she rarely asked a question, or demanded any explanation, hearing all in silence, as though hoping that with time and patience her powers of mind would enable her to surmount the difficulties that now confronted and defied her.

For days and days did she labour to remember what great event it was had first led her to this town of Lifford, the very name of which was strange to her. The same dislike to ask a question pursued her here, and she pondered and pondered over the knotty point, till at last, of a sudden, just as though the light broke instantaneously upon her, she cried out,—

"I remember it all! I know it now! Has the trial come off? What tidings of my grandfather?" The poor woman to whom this was addressed imagined it was a return of her raving, and quietly brought the doctor to her side. "Are the assizes over?" whispered Kate in his ear.

"More than a month ago."

"There was an old man—Malone. Is he tried?"

"The murder case? I was at it."

"And the verdict?"

"The verdict was guilty, with a recommendation to mercy for his great age, and the want of premeditation in the crime."

"Well, go on."

"The judge concurred, and he will not be executed."

"He will be banished, however—banished for life," said she, in a low, faltering voice.

"To believe himself, he asks no better. He made a speech of nigh an hour in his defence, and if it had not been that at the last he attempted a sort of justification of what he had done, the judge would not, in all probability, have charged against him; but the old fellow insisted so strongly on the point that a poor man must always look to himself and not to the law for justice, that he destroyed his case."

"And was there not one to advise him?"

"Apparently not; and when the Chief Baron named a lawyer to defend him, the old fellow refused the aid, and said, 'The work that's done for nothing is worth nothing. I'll just speak for myself.'"

"And this other man—O'Rorke, I mean—where was he?—what did he do?"

"He left this the night before the trial came on, with that young gentleman that was here."

"Ah, he left him! Deserted him in his last need!" cried she, faintly, but with an intense agony in the tone.

"Had they been friends?" asked the doctor; but she never heard the question, and sat with her hands clasped before her, motionless and silent.

"Were you there throughout the whole trial?" asked she, at last.

"No; I was present only on the last day, and I heard his speech."

"Tell me how he looked; was he broken or depressed?"

"The very reverse. It would have been better for him if he had looked cast down or in grief. It was too bold and too defiant he was, and this grew on him as he spoke, till, towards the end of his speech, he all but said, 'I dare you to find me guilty!'"

"The brave old man!" muttered she below her breath.

"When the crowd in the court cheered him, I knew what would happen. No judge in the land could have said a word for him after that."

"The brave old man!" muttered she again.

"It seemed at one time he was going to call witnesses to character, and he had a list of them in his hand, but he suddenly changed his mind, and said, 'No, my lord, whatever you're going to do with me this day, I'll do my best to meet it, but I won't make any one stand up here, and have the shame to say he knows a man that the mere turn of a straw might send to the gallows!"

"Did he say that?" cried she, wildly.

"He did; and he looked at the jury all the while, as though to say, 'Take care what you do; it's a man's life is on it!"

"Did he ever mention my name? Did he ask for any one in particular, did you hear?" asked she, faintly.

"No; but before he began his speech he looked all over the court for full five minutes or more, as if in search of some one, and even motioned some people in the gallery to stand aside that he might see better, and then he drew a long breath—either disappointment or relief; it might be either."

"How could they have the heart to say guilty?" said she.

"There was no other word to say. They were on their oaths, and so the judge told them, and the whole country was looking at them."

"And where is he now?" asked she, eagerly.

"All the prisoners for transportation have been sent on to Dublin. They'll not leave the country before spring."

She hid her head between her hands, and sat for a long time without speaking. At last she raised her face, and her eyes were red with weeping, and her cheeks furrowed.

"Doctor," said she, plaintively, "have I strength enough to go to him?"

He shook his head mournfully, in token of dissent.

"Am I too ill?"

"You are too weak, my poor child; you have not strength for such a journey."

"But I have great courage, doctor, and I can bear far more fatigue than you would think."

He shook his head again.

"You do not know," said she, in a low but earnest voice, "that I was reared in hardship, brought up in want, and cold, and misery. Ay, and I have never forgotten it!"

He smiled; it was half in compassion, half in disbelief.

"Do you know me?—do you know who I am?" asked she, eagerly.

"I know it all, my poor child—I know it all," said he, sadly.

"Know it all? What does your phrase mean? How all?"

He arose, but she grasped his hand with both hers, and held him fast.

"You shall not leave this till you have answered me!" cried she. "Is it not enough that I am sick and friendless? Why should you add the torture of doubt to such misery as mine? Tell me, I beseech you—I entreat of you, tell me what you have heard of me? I will deny nothing that is true!"

He pleaded warmly at first to be let off altogether, and then to be allowed further time—some period when she had grown to be stronger and better able to bear what he should have to tell her. Her entreaties only became more urgent, and she at last evinced such excitement, that in terror lest a return of her brain fever might be feared, he yielded, promising that the confidence reposed in him was a trust nothing should induce him to break.

There is no need that the reader should pass through the sad ordeal of Kate's suffering, even as a witness. No need is there that her shame, her sorrow, her misery, and, last of all, her passionate indignation, should be displayed before him; nor that he should see her as she sat there wrung with affliction, or half maddened with rage. Compressing the doctor's story into the fewest words, it was this:—

"Kate had met young Ladarelle at Dalradern Castle, where a passion had grown up between them. The young man, heir to a vast fortune, and sure of a high position, did not scruple to avail himself of what advantages his brilliant station conferred—won her affections, and seduced her with the promise of a speedy marriage. Wearied out at the unfulfilment of this pledge, she had fled from Dalradern, and sought refuge at Arran, intending to reveal all to her uncle, whose pride would inevitably have sought out her betrayer, and avenged her wrong, when she yielded to O'Rorke's persuasion to meet her lover at Westport, where, as he assured her, every preparation for their marriage had been arranged. Thus induced, she had quitted her uncle's house, and met Ladarelle. A mock marriage, performed by a degraded priest, had united them, and they were about to set out for the continent, when she was struck down by brain fever. The fear of being recognized, as the town was then filling for the assizes, determined Ladarelle and his friend to take their departure. There was deposited with the doctor a sum sufficient to defray every charge of her illness, with strict injunctions to keep all secret, and induce her, if she recovered, to proceed to Paris, where, at a given address, she would be welcomed and well received."

This was the substance of a narrative that took long in the telling, not alone for the number of incidents it recorded, but that as he proceeded, the unlucky doctor's difficulties increased as some point of unusual delicacy would intervene, or some revelation would be required, which, in the presence of the principal actor in it, became a matter of no small embarrassment to relate.

" And how much of all this, sir, do you believe ? " said she, calmly, as he concluded.

He was silent, for the question impugned more than his credulity, and he hesitated what to answer.

" I ask you, sir, how much of this story do you believe ? "

" There is a colour to part of it," said he, diffidently.

" And what part ? "

" The part which refers to the marriage here."

" What do you mean, sir ? "

" When you lay on that bed yonder, with fixed eyes, motionless, unconscious, and, as all believed, dying, a priest muttered some words over you, and placed your hand in that of this young man I spoke of. The woman of the house saw this through the keyhole of the door; she saw a ring produced, too, but it fell to the ground, and the priest laughingly said, ' It's just as good without the ring ;' and, after they had gone, the woman picked it up beneath the bed, and has it now. She saw them, besides, when they came downstairs, sit down at a table and draw up a paper, to which the priest ordered her to be a witness to by her mark, as she cannot write; and this paper she believes to have had some reference to the scene she saw above. All this I believe, for she who told it to me is truthful and honest."

Kate passed her hand across her forehead like one trying to clear her faculties for better reflection, and then said : " But this is no marriage ! "

" Certainly not ; nor could it have been had recourse to to quiet scruples of yours, since you were unconscious of all that went on."

"And with what object, then, was it done?"

This was what he could not answer, and he sat silent and thoughtful; at last he said, "Were you not at this castle in Wales I spoke of?"

"Yes."

"And left it for Arran?"

"Yes," said she again, "that also is true; and I left it to come and see that old man whose trial you witnessed. He was my grandfather."

"Your grandfather! Surely I am speaking to Miss Luttrell of Arran?"

She nodded, and, after a moment, said; "That old man was my mother's father, and I journeyed here for no other end than to see him and comfort him. Of all these schemes and plots I know nothing, nor have I the strength now to attempt to think of them. Which of us will you believe, sir—them or me?"

"I believe you—every word you have told me," said he; "but can you forgive me for the tale I have told you?"

"Enough, now, that you do not believe it. And yet what can it matter to me how I am thought of? The opinion of the world is only of moment to those who have friends. *I* have not one!"

He did his best to comfort and to cheer her; he said allthose kind things which even the humblest of his walk know how to pour into the ear of affliction, and he urged her to go back at once to Arran—to her uncle.

The counsel came well timed, and she caught at it eagerly. "My wretchedness will plead for me if I cannot speak for myself," said she, half aloud; and now all her thoughts were how to reach Westport, and take boat for the island. The doctor volunteered to see her so far on her journey, and they set out the same evening.

Arrived at Westport, tired and fatigued as she was, she would not stay to rest, but embarked at once. The night was a bright and pleasant one, with a light land breeze, and as she stepped into the boat, she said, "The sea has given me the feeling of health again. I begin to hope I shall live to see you and thank you for all your friendship. Good-bye." And as she spoke, the craft was away, and she saw no more.

The poor suffering frame was so overcome by fatigue, that they were already at anchor in the harbour of Arran before she awoke. When she did so, her sensations were so confused that she was almost afraid to speak or question the boatmen, lest her words should seem wild and unconnected.

"Are you coming back with us, miss?" asked one of the men, as she stepped on shore.

"No—yes—I believe not; it may be—but I hope not," said she, in a broken accent.

"Are we to wait for you?" repeated he.

"I cannot say. No—no—this is my home."

"A dreary home it is, then!" said the man, turning away; and the words fell heavily on her heart, and she sat down on a stone, and gazed at the wild bleak mountain, and the little group of stunted trees amidst which the Abbey stood; and truly had he called it a dreary home.

The dawn was just breaking as she reached the door, and ere she had time to knock, Molly saw her from her window, and rushed out to meet her and welcome her home. Almost hysterical with joy and grief together, the poor creature clung to her wildly. "It's in time you're come, darlin'," she cried, amidst her sobs; "he's going fast, sleeping away like a child, but asking for you every time he wakes up, and we have to tell him that you were tired, and were gone to lie down, and then he mutters some words and goes off again."

It needed but this sorrow, Kate thought, to fill up the measure of her misery; and she tottered into the little room and sat down without uttering a word, while the woman went on with the story of her master's illness.

"A mere cold at first, brought on by going down to the point of rocks at daybreak to watch the boats. He thought he'd see you coming back. At last, when he was so ill that he couldn't leave the house, he said that the man that brought him the first news you were coming, he'd give him hothouse and garden rent free for his life, and it didn't need that same to make us long to see you! Then came the fever, and for a while he forgot everything, but he talked away about poor Master Harry, and what a differ we'll feel when *he* was the master, raving, raving on, and never ceasing. After that he came back to his senses, and began to ask where you were, and why you didn't sit with him. There he is now! Hear that! that's your name he's trying to say. Come to him while it's time."

Kate arose. She never spoke, but followed the woman through the passage, and entered the little bedroom, where a faint lamp blended its light with the breaking day.

The sick man's eager eye saw her as she crossed the threshold, and in a vague, discordant voice he cried out, "I knew you'd come to me. Sit here—sit down here and hold my hand. Such stories as they told me!" muttered he, as he caught her hand in his grasp. "They can't make that drink for me, Kate," said he, in a low, whining voice.

"I'll make it, dearest uncle. I'll be your nurse now," said she, stooping and kissing his forehead.

"No, no; I'll not let you leave me again. You must sit there and speak to me. When you go away, I feel as if you had gone for weeks."

"My dear, dear uncle!"

"Strange! how strange!" whispered he. "I knew well you were there—there, in that room yonder, asleep, but my thoughts would wander away till I came to think you had left me—deserted me! Don't cry, darling. I felt that tear; it fell on my cheek. I do believe," cried he, aloud, "they wished me to think I was deserted—a Luttrell of Arran dying without a friend or a kinsman to close his eyes. And the last Luttrell, too! The haughty Luttrells, they called us once! Look around you, girl, at this misery, this want, this destitution! Are these the signs that show wealth and power? And it is all that is left to us! All!"

"My own dear uncle, if you but get well, and be yourself once more, it is enough of wealth for us."

"Are we alone, Kate?" asked he, stealthily.

"No, sir; poor Molly is here."

"Tell her to go. I have something to say to you. Look in that top drawer for a paper tied with a string. No, not that—*that* is a direction for my funeral; the other—yes, you have it now—is my will. Arran will be yours, Kate. You will love it through all its barrenness, and never part with it. Promise me that."

She muttered something through her sobs.

"Be kind to these poor people. I have never been to them as I ought, but I brought them a broken heart as well as a broken fortune. And wherever you live, come back sometimes to see these old rocks, and sit in that old chair; for, solitary as it all is, it would grieve me bitterly if I thought it were to be deserted!"

She tried to speak, but could not.

"If those on the mainland should try to encroach—if they should come upon your fishing grounds, girl—defend your rights. We have had these royalties for more than three hundred years. Be firm, be bold!" He muttered on for some moments, and the last words his lips uttered were, "A Luttrell of Arran!" His eyes closed as he said it, and he covered his face with his hand. Kate thought it was sleep, but it was the last sleep of all.

CHAPTER LVIII.

SIR WITHIN ABROAD.

SIR WITHIN, accompanied by Grenfell, who was now become an "indispensable" to him, left Dalradern for the continent. The old man neither knew nor cared what direction he should take. The consciousness that any avowal of his love for Kate would but expose him to bitter raillery and ridicule debarred him from all the sympathy he so much needed. Such a passion at his age was exactly one of those follies that all concur to laugh at, and it is precisely in the class that this old man pertained to, these dowagers of the world of statecraft, that ridicule is most powerful. The man who deems a witty *mot* a triumph is just as ready to accept a severe epigram as a death-wound.

One would not have believed how a few days of sorrow could have aged him. It was not alone that a stern melancholy sat on his features, but that even his erect carriage and firm step had left him, and he walked now with bent-down head feebly and uncertainly. Arrived at Paris, Grenfell endeavoured to interest him by some of the pleasures of that marvellous capital. He induced him to dine at the "Rocher," and to drive in the Bois; he narrated all the passing gossip of the day; told him the scandals in vogue, and showed him the actors in them as they drove by on the Boulevards; but it seemed as though all the world of these vanities had closed for him, and he neither smiled nor vouchsafed a word as he listened.

Once only did he betray the slightest animation of voice or manner; it was when Grenfell pointed out to him in a carriage one of the great beauties of the time. The old man looked fixedly for an instant at her, and then, turning away his head, muttered, "*She* is infinitely more beautiful."

Paris he soon discovered to be too noisy and too bustling. For Switzerland, the season was already late, and the climate was severe. Spain or Italy remained, and he was yet hesitating which to take, when Grenfell mentioned that he saw Mr. M'Kinlay's name amongst the arrivals at the hotel, and, on inquiry, learned that he was on his way out to Italy to see Vyner, and was to leave Paris that night.

"I think I should like to see Vyner too; that is, if he would receive me," said Sir Within, feebly. "Could you manage to catch this Mr. M'Kinlay?"

"Shall we have him to dinner to-day?"

"No; I think not. I'm not equal to it."

"Suppose you were to try. He's not a person to make much ceremony with. If he bores you, pretend indisposition, and leave him."

The old man smiled—a strange, dubious sort of smile it was; perhaps it amused him to receive a lesson in social craft or address from "a Mr. George Grenfell." At all events, Grenfell read the smile as a partial concurrence with his suggestion, and went on:—

"M'Kinlay would be flattered by the invitation; and, if you should want him in any other way, and he will be all the more tractable."

"*That* is certainly something," replied he, musing.

"Not to say," added Grenfell, laughing, "that we run no great risk in being tired of him, since the mail leaves at ten, and he'll scarcely remain after nine!"

"That is also something," said Sir Within again.

"Here goes, then, for a note; or stay, I'll just see if he be in the house. We shall say six o'clock dinner, and alone; these men abhor the idea of dressing, if they can help it."

Sir Within merely raised his eyebrows, half pitifully, that there were such people; and Grenfell hastened away on his mission. He was back in a moment. "Just caught him getting into a cab; he'll be delighted—he *was* delighted when I gave him your message. He goes off to-night, as the waiter said, and apparently full of important news. Vyner, it would seem, has come all right. All he told me was, 'Sir Gervais will be on his legs again;' but we'll have it all after dinner."

Sir Within heard the tidings with far less interest than Grenfell looked for. He smiled benignly, indeed; he muttered something about being "charmed to hear it;" and then heaved a heavy sigh and sat down with his back to the light. How heartless and unfeeling did it seem to him to have so much compassion for loss of mere fortune, and not one word of sympathy for a broken and bereaved heart! What a world it was! What a world of perverted feeling and misapplied generosity!

Grenfell said something about the epicurism of the lawyer class, and went off to give special directions about the dinner; and the old man dozed, and woke, and wandered on in thought over the past, and dozed again, till his servant came to apprise him it was time to dress.

It was the first time he was to encounter the presence of a stranger after some months of seclusion, and he shrank from the effort, and would have retreated altogether if he could only have found a pretext. Conventionalities are, however, the tyrants of such men as himself, and the bare idea of anything unseemly in politeness was unendurable. He suffered his valet, therefore, to restore him to something of his former appearance. His eyebrows were newly tinted and well arched; his furrowed cheeks were skilfully smoothed over and suffused with a soft, permanent blush; and his whiskers were ingeniously brought into keeping with the vigorous darkness of his raven wig, imparting to him altogether a sort of surcharged vitality, that, to an acute observer, might have imparted a sense little short of horror. The very brilliants of his rings caught a twinkling lustre from his tremulous hands, as though to impress the beholder with the contrast between splendour and decay.

Nor was his manner less unreal than his appearance. With his darkened eyebrows and his diamond studs he had put on his old tone of soft insinuation, and all that was natural in the man was merged in the crafty devices of the minister. No wonder was it M'Kinlay was charmed with a tone and address that had done service in courts. Sir Within thus "warmed to his work," and actually at last began to feel pleasure in the success he had achieved; and even Grenfell, long trained to the habits of the world, was astonished at conversational resources for which he had never given him credit.

Thus happily did the dinner proceed; and when the servants retired, M'Kinlay had arrived at that point of beatitude in which he regarded the company as something superlatively high, and himself fully worthy of it.

"You are on your way to my old friend Vyner, I think?" said Sir Within, with a heartiness that ignored all estrangement between them.

"Yes, sir; on a pleasanter mission, I rejoice to say, than when I last travelled the same road."

"He is all right again, I hear," said Grenfell, who meant, by an abrupt declaration, to disarm all the conventional reserve of the lawyer.

"Well, that would be saying too much, perhaps—too much; but I hope, Mr. Grenfell, he is on the way to it."

"With M'Kinlay for his pilot, he'll make the harbour, I have no doubt whatever," said Sir Within, smiling graciously.

"I shall certainly do my best, sir," said the other, bowing. "Not alone because it is my duty, but that Sir Gervais has been good enough to regard me, for many years back, in the light of his friend as well as his lawyer."

"Of that I am well aware," said Sir Within, lifting his glass and appearing to be quietly pledging Mr. M'Kinlay to himself as a toast.

"Has the scoundrel who ran away with his securities been caught?" asked Grenfell, impatiently.

"No, sir; he is beyond being caught—he is dead." After a pause, which Sir Within and Grenfell saw all the importance of not breaking, but leaving to M'Kinlay the task of continuing his narrative, that gentleman went on: "It is quite a romance—positively a romance in real life. I'm afraid," said he, looking at his watch, "I shall not have time to tell you the story in all its details. I must start by the ten-twenty train for Lyons."

"We are only a few minutes after eight now," said Grenfell. "Let us hear the story."

"Even in outline," chimed in Sir Within, blandly. "Pray help yourself to the wine—it is beside you."

"I can give you but a sketch—a mere sketch, sir. It would seem, sir, that ever since the French conquest of Algeria, a French company has been engaged in the supply of munitions of war to the Arabs, and to this end had established agents at Tripoli, Tunis, and Morocco, who were thus enabled to transport these supplies into the interior of Africa. The director of this company was La Harpe, the Parisian banker, with whom Sir Gervais became acquainted through Mr. Gennet, himself the owner of several shares in the undertaking."

Grenfell sighed drearily at the long-windedness which he saw awaited them; but Sir Within looked intensely interested, and M'Kinlay went on, and, with a prolixity that I have no desire to imitate, entered upon the nature of this company, its operations, and its gains. With a painstaking minuteness he described the false trade-marks used to prevent discovery, and how the weapons, which were forged in France, bore the stamp of Sheffield or Birmingham.

"Giving 'la perfide Albion' all the credit of the treachery," said Sir Within, smiling.

"Precisely, sir," said M'Kinlay, delighted at the attention so graciously vouchsafed him. "I see you understand it all. Indeed, I may remark here, that a very sharp interchange of notes took place between the two governments on the subject, the French alleging, and with apparent reason——"

"Get on, in Heaven's name, to what concerns Vyner," cried Grenfell, "for it only wants a quarter to nine, otherwise you'll have to leave us without the catastrophe."

"I obey, sir," said M'Kinlay, with a certain irritation of voice at the same time. "I must observe, you will find it very difficult to fill up for yourselves the gaps you insist on my passing over. Mr. Gennet, then, for it is of him you wish me to speak very soon perceiving that Sir Gervais Vyner was not a man to be drawn into such an illicit traffic, assumed to have obtained from the Bey of Tunis and others most valuable concessions to mines of various kinds, and by specimens of ore, reports of scientific mineralogists, and such-like, imposed on him so far as to induce him to enter largely into the speculation, not at all aware that every shilling he advanced was directed to the great enterprise of La Harpe and Company. It was not a very difficult task for an accomplished swindler like Gennet to show that the mines, which had no existence, had proved a failure. Indeed, the disastrous issue of the enterprise was so plausibly described, and the affairs were wound up with such apparent fairness, that it was no wonder if poor Sir Gervais actually pitied Gennet, and went so far as to beg he might not be molested. I assure you, sir, I have a letter in my desk that says— "

"Nine o'clock!" solemnly ejaculated Grenfell, as the hour rang out from a neighbouring steeple.

"I hear it, sir, and regret much that my time should be so limited; but to resume: So soon as Gennet had established the fact of the mock bankruptcy, he fled from Europe, and it was believed took refuge in America, where he had lived many years as partner in a mercantile house—the firm of Reay, Pate, and Brothers, Forty-sixth Street, New York, large shipowners, and importers on their own account. I feel I am prolix, Mr. Grenfell, even without the admonition of that painful sigh. But really, gentlemen, I am merely selecting the salient points of a very complicated incident, and not entering upon any but the strictly essential details."

Sir Within assured him he felt an unbounded confidence in his discretion, and he resumed:—

"There chanced to be in the employ of that firm a merchant captain named Dodge, a man of remarkable energy of character and great daring; and here I may mention, as a curious circumstance, that I once happened by a singular coincidence to meet with this man, and be his fellow-traveller, under no common circumstances."

"I believe I can recall them," said Sir Within. "I was the guest of my friend Sir Gervais on the night you told a very remarkable story, in which this man's name occurred. The name was a strange one, and it held a place in my memory. If I mistake not, you crossed over to the Arran Islands in his company?"

"I am much flattered to find, Sir Within, that you remember the incident, though I see how trying it proves to Mr. Grenfell's patience."

"Not in the least, if you will only consent to start by the morning's train instead of to-night's. Do that and you will find you never had a more patient nor more interested listener."

"Perfectly impossible, sir. I have timed the whole journey by Bradshaw; and to catch the mail-boat—the *Queen Hortense*—at Marseilles, on Saturday, I must arrive by the early train, and there is the half-hour now chiming. I trust Sir Within Wardle will forgive my abrupt leave-taking. One more glass of this excellent claret, and I am off."

"Pray give my very kindest regards to Sir Gervais, and my most respectful homage to the ladies. Though I am not permitted to learn how the good fortune came, let me, I beg, be associated with every congratulation the event inspires." And with this Frenchified expression of his satisfaction, the old diplomatist drew himself up like one who felt that he stood once more on his native heath.

So wrapt up was he, indeed, in this revival of an old part he had so long played with success, that he never noticed how Grenfell had left the room along with M'Kinlay, and he sat gazing at the fire and thinking over bygones. Nor was he aware how time flitted past, when Grenfell returned and took his place opposite him.

"I was determined to have all I could get out of him," said Grenfell. "I jumped into the cab with him, and went to the railroad station. What between his dreary tiresomeness and the street noises as we rattled along, I gained very little; but this much I have learned: That the man Gennet, who had once, as the lawyers call it, 'compassed' the life of Dodge, by sending him to sea in a rotten vessel, immensely insured, and predestined to shipwreck, was recognized by this same skipper in the street of Tripoli. Dodge, it seems, had just been landed, with one other survivor of his crew, having blown up his vessel to prevent its falling into the hands of some Riff pirates, and after unheard-of peril and sufferings was picked up at sea with his companion, both badly wounded by the explosion, though they had thrown themselves into the sea before the vessel blew up. All I could do would not hurry M'Kinlay over this part of the story, which I believe he imagined he told effectively, and I had only got him to Tripoli as we drove into the yard of the station. While higgling with the cabman and the porters, he stammered out something about Dodge standing at his Consul's door as Gennet rode past with a large suite of Arab followers; that the skipper sprang upon him like a tiger and tore him from his horse. A dreadful struggle must have ensued, for Gennet died of his wounds that night, and Dodge was nearly cut to pieces by the guard, his life being saved by the desperate bravery of his friend, who was at last rescued by the members of the Consulate. The bell rang as we arrived at this critical moment, but I followed him to his compartment, and, at the risk of being carried off, sat down beside him. The miserable proser wanted to involve me in an account of the criminal law of Tripoli when any one holding office under the Bey should have been the victim of attack, but I swore I knew it perfectly, and asked what about Gennet? He then began to narrate how the French Consul, having intervened to defend the interests of his countryman, discovered the whole plot against France, found all the details of the purchase of war materials, bills of lading, and such-like; and, besides these, masses of Vyner's acceptances, which had never been negotiated. Another—the last—bell now rang out, and as I sprang from my seat he leaned out of the window, and said: 'Dodge, it is thought, will recover; his friend is now with Sir Gervais, at Chiavari, and turns out to be Luttrell, the young fellow whom we picked up——' When, where, or how, I cannot say, for the train now moved on, and the tiresome old dog was carried off at a very different pace from that of his narrative."

Sir Within listened with all the semblance of interest and attention. Once or twice he interjected an "Ah!" or, "How strange!" But it is only truthful to own that he paid very little real attention to the story, and could not well have said at the end whether Dodge was not the villain of the piece, and young Luttrell his guilty accomplice.

Very grateful was he, however, when it ended, and when Grenfell said, "I suppose Vyner has had enough of speculation now to last his lifetime."

"I trust so sincerely," said Sir Within, with a smile.

"It is such rank folly for a man to adventure into a career of which he knows nothing, and take up as his associates a set of men totally unlike any he has ever lived with."

"I perfectly agree with you," said the other, with an urbane bow. "You have admirably expressed the sentiment I experience at this moment; and even with my brief opportunity of arriving at a judgment, I am free to confess that I thought this gentleman who has just left us—Mr. M‘Kinlay, I think he is called—a very dangerous man—a most dangerous man.

Grenfell looked at him, and fortunate was it that Sir Within did not note that look, so full was it of pitiless contempt; and then rising, he said, "It is later than I thought. You said something about Versailles for to-morrow, didn't you?"

"I have not heard whether his Majesty will receive me."

Grenfell started, and stared at him. Had it come to this already? Was the mind gone and the intellect shattered?

"You spoke of a day in the country somewhere," reiterated Grenfell, "St. Germains, or Versailles."

"Very true. I am most grateful for your reminder. It will be charming. I am quite in a humour for a few pleasant people, and I hope the weather will favour us."

"Good-night," said Grenfell, abruptly, and left the room.

* * *

CHAPTER LIX.

MR. GREENFELL'S ROOM.

Mr. Grenfell sat in an easy-chair, wrapped in a most comfortable dressing-gown, and his feet encased in the softest of slippers, before a cheery wood fire, smoking. His reflections were not depressing. The scene from which he had just come satisfied him as to a fact—which men like Grenfell have a sort of greedy appetite to be daily assured of—that "money is not everything in this world." Simple as the proposition seems, it takes a long and varied knowledge of life to bring home that conviction forcibly and effectually. Men are much more prone to utter it than to believe it, and more ready to believe it than to act upon it.

Now, though Grenfell was ready to admit that "money was not everything," he coupled it with what he believed to be just as true—that it was a man's own fault that made it so. He instanced to his mind the old man he had just quitted, and who, except in the quality of years, was surrounded with everything one could desire—name, fortune, station, more than average abilities, and good health—and yet he must needs fall in love! By what fatality was it that a man always chose the worst road? What malevolent ingenuity ever selected the precise path that led to ruin? Were there no other vices he could have taken to? Wine, gambling, gluttony, would have spared his intellect for a year or two certainly. The brains of old people stand common wear and tear pretty well; it is only when the affections come to bear upon the mind that the system gives way. That a man should assume old age gracefully and becomingly, the heart ought to decay and grow callous, just as naturally as hair whitens and teeth fail. Nature never contemplated such a compact as that the blood at seventy should circulate as at thirty, and that the case-hardened, world-worn man should have a revival of hope, trustfulness, and self-delusion. It was thus Grenfell regarded the question, and the view was not the less pleasing that he felt how safely he stood as regards all those seductions which fool other men and render their lives ridiculous. At all events, the world should not laugh at *him*. This is a philosophy that suffices for a large number of people in life; and simple as the first element of it may seem, it involves more hard-heartedness, more cruel indifference to others, and a more practical selfishness, than any other code I know of.

If he was well pleased that Vyner should "come all right again," it was because he liked a rich friend far better than a poor one; but there mingled with his satisfaction a regret that he had not made overtures to the Vyners—the "women," he called them—in their hour of dark fortune, and established with them a position he could continue to maintain in their prosperity. "Yes," thought he, "I ought to have been taught by those people who always courted the Bourbons in their exile, and speculated on their restoration." But the restoration of the Vyner dynasty was a thing he had never dreamed of. Had he only had the very faintest clue to it, what a game he might have played! What generous proffers he might have made, how ready he might have been with his aid! It is only just to him to own that he very rarely was wanting in such prescience; he studied life pretty much as a physician studies disease, and argued from the presence of one symptom which was to follow it.

His present speculations took this form. Vyner will at once return to England, and go back to "the House;" he'll want occupation, and he'll want, besides, to reinstate himself with the world. With his position and his abilities—fair abilities they were—he may aspire to office, and Grenfell liked official people. They were a sort of priesthood, who could slip a friend into the sanctuary occasionally, not to add, that all privileged classes have an immense attraction for the man whose birth has debarred him from their intimacy. Now, he could not present himself more auspiciously to the Vyners than in the company of Sir Within Wardle, who was most eager to renew all his former relations with them. Nor was it quite impossible but that Grenfell might seem to be the agency by which the reconciliation was brought about. A clever stroke of policy that, and one which would doubtless go far to render him acceptable to the "women."

If we must invade the secrecy of a very secret nature, we must confess that Mr. Grenfell, in his gloomier hours, in his dark days at home, when dyspeptic and depressed, speculated on the possible event that he might at last be driven to marry. He thought of it the way men think of the precautions instilled by a certain time of life, the necessity of more care in diet, more regular hours, and such like. There would come a time, he suspected, when country-houses would be less eager for him, and the young fellows who now courted and surrounded him would have themselves slipped into "mediævalty," and need him no more. It was sad enough to think of, but he saw it, he knew it. Nothing, then, remained but a wife.

It was all-essential—indeed indispensable—that she should be a person of family and connections; one, in fact, that might be able to keep open the door of society—even half ajar—but still enough to let him slip in and mingle with those inside. Vyner's sister-in-law was pretty much what he wanted. She was no longer young, and consequently her market-value placed her nearer to his hopes; and although Sir Gervais had never yet made him known to Lady Vyner or Georgina, things were constantly done abroad that could not have occurred at home. Men were dear friends on the Tiber who would not have been known to each other on the Thames. The result of all his meditations was, that he must persuade Sir Within to cross the Alps, and then, by some lucky chance or other, come unexpectedly upon the Vyners. Fortune should take care of the rest.

Arrived at this conclusion, and his third cigar all but smoked out, he was thinking of bed, when a tap came to his door. Before he had well time to say "Come in," the door opened, and young Ladarelle's valet, Mr. Fisk, stood before him.

"I hope you'll forgive me, sir," said he, submissively, "for obtruding upon you at such an hour, but I have been all over Paris, and only found out where you were this minute. I was at the station this evening when you drove up there, but I lost you in the crowd, and never could find you again."

"All which zeal implies that you had some business with me," said Grenfell, slowly.

"Yes, sir, certainly. It is what I mean, sir," said he, wiping his forehead, and betraying by his manner a considerable amount of agitation.

"Now, then, what is it?"

"It is my master, sir, Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, has got into trouble—very serious trouble, I'm afraid, too—and if *you* can't help him through it, there's nobody can, I'm sure."

"A duel?"

"No, sir, he don't fight."

"Debt?"

"Not exactly debt, sir, but he has been arrested within the last few hours."

"Out with it. What's the story?"

"You have heard about that Irish business, I suppose, sir—that story of the young girl he pretended to have married to prevent Sir Within making her my lady——"

"I know it all; go on."

"Well, sir, the worst of all that affair was, that it brought my master into close intimacy with a very dangerous fellow called O'Rorke, and though Mr. Ladarelle paid him—and paid him handsomely, too, for all he had done, and took his passage out to Melbourne, the fellow wouldn't go. No, sir, he swore he'd see Paris, and enjoy a little of Paris life, before he'd sail. *I* was for getting him aboard when he was half drunk, and shipping him off before he was aware of it; but my master was afraid of him, and declared that he was quite capable of coming back from the farthest end of the world to 'serve him out' for anything like 'a cross.'"

"Go on—come to the arrest—what was it for?" broke in Grenfell, impatiently.

"Cheating at cards, sir," plumped out the other, half vexed at being deemed prosy. "That's the charge, sir; false cards and cogged dice, and the police have them in their hands this minute. It was all this fellow's doing, sir; it was he persuaded Mr. Dolly to set up the rooms, and the tables, and here's what it's come to!"

"And there *was* false play?"

"So they say, sir. One of the ladies that was taken up is well known to the police; she is an Italian marchioness—at least they call her so—and the story goes 'well protected,' as they say here."

"I don't see that there's anything to be done in the matter, Fisk; the law will deal with them, and pretty sharply too, and none can interfere with it. Are you compromised yourself?"

"No, sir, not in the least. I was back and forward to town once or twice a week, getting bills discounted and the like, but I never went near the rooms. I took good care of that."

"Such being the case, I suspect your affection for your master will not preve fatal to you—eh?"

"Perhaps not, sir; a strong constitution and reg'lar habit may help me over it, but there's another point I ain't so easy about. Mr. Dolly has got a matter of nigh four hundred pounds of mine. I lent it at twenty-five per cent. to him last year, and I begin to fear the security is not what it ought to be."

"There's something in that, certainly," said Grenfell, slowly.

"Yes, sir, there's a great deal in it, because they say here, if Mr. Dolly should be sent to the galleys ever so short a time, he loses civil rights, and when he loses *them*, he needn't pay ne debts to any one."

"Blessed invention those galleys must be, if they could give the immunity you mention!" said Grenfell, laughing; "but I opine your law is not quite accurate—at any rate, Fisk, there's nothing to be done for him. If he stood alone in the case, it is just possible there would be a chance of helping him, but here he must accept the lot of his associates. By the way, what did he mean by that mock marriage? What was the object of it?" This query of Grenfell's was thrown out in a sort of random carelessness, its real object being to see if Mr. Fisk was on "the square" with him.

"Don't you know, sir, that he wanted to prevent the old gent at Dalradern from marrying her? One of the great lawyers thinks that the estate doesn't go to the Ladarelles at all if Sir Within had an heir, and though it's not very likely, sir, it might be possible. Master Dolly, at all events, was mortally afraid of it, and he always said that the mere chance cost him from fifteen to twenty per cent. in his dealings with money-lenders."

"Are you known to Sir Within, Fisk? Has he seen you at the Castle?"

"Not to know me, sir; he never notices any of *us* at all. Yates, his man, knows me."

"Yates is not with him. He has got a French valet who lived with him some years ago, and so I was thinking, perhaps the best way to serve you would be to take you myself. What do you say to it?"

"I'm ever grateful, sir, to you. I couldn't wish for anything better."

"It will be pleasanter than 'Clichy,' at all events, Fisk, and there's no doubt the police here will look out for you when they discover you were in Mr. Ladarelle's service."

"And am I safe here, sir?"

"You'll be safe, because we leave here to-morrow. So come over here after breakfast, and we'll settle everything. By the way, I'd not go near Mr. Ladarelle if I were you; you can't be of use to him, and it's as well to take care of yourself."

"I was just thinking that same, sir; not to say that if that fellow O'Rorke saw me, it's just as likely he'd say I was one of the gang."

"Quite so. Be here about twelve or one, not later."

"What do you think about my money, sir—the loan to Mr. Dolly, I mean?"

"It's not a choice investment, Fisk—at least, there are securities I would certainly prefer to it."

"Three years' wages and perquisites, sir!" cried, he mournfully.

"Well, your master will probably have five years to ruminate over the wrong he has done you."

"At the galleys? Do you really mean the galleys, sir?"

"I really mean at the galleys, Fisk; and if he be not a more amusing companion there than I have found him in ordinary life, I can only say I do not envy the man he will be chained to."

Mr. Fisk grinned a very hearty concurrence with the sentiment, and took a respectful leave, and withdrew.

CHAPTER LX.

MR. M'KINLAY IN THE TOILS.

Mr. M'Kinlay was too acute an observer not to see that his arrival at the Boschetto was matter of general satisfaction, and his welcome peculiarly cordial. The Vyners had just escaped from a heavy calamity, and were profuse of grateful emotions to all who had assisted them in their troubles.

Now, M'Kinlay had not been extravagant in his offices of friendship, but, with a sort of professional instinct, he had always contemplated the possibility of a restoration, and had never betrayed by his manner any falling off from his old terms of loyalty and devotion.

The Vyners, however, had their acute attack of gratitude, and they felt very warmly towards him, and even went so far as to designate by the word "delicacy" the cold reserve which he had once or twice manifested. Vyner gave him up his own room, and the little study adjoining it, and Georgina—the haughty Georgina—vouchsafed to look over its internal economies, and see that it was perfect in all its comforts. She went further; she actually avowed to him the part she had taken in his reception, and coquettishly engaged him to remember how much of his accommodation had depended on *her* foresight.

Mr. M'Kinlay was delighted; he had not been without certain misgivings, as he journeyed along over the Alps, that he might have shown himself a stronger, stancher friend to Vyner in his hour of adversity. He had his doubts as to whether he had not been betrayed once or twice into a tone of rebuke or censure, and he knew he had assumed a manner of more freedom than consorted with their former relations. Would these lapses be remembered against him now? Should he find them all colder, stiffer, haughtier than ever?

What a relief to him was the gracious, the more than gracious reception he met with! How pleasant to be thanked most enthusiastically for the long journey he had come, with the consciousness he was to be paid for it as handsomely afterwards! How lightly he took his fatigues, how cheerily he talked of everything, slyly insinuating now and then that if they would look back to his letters they would see that he always pointed to this issue to the case, and for his part never felt that the matter was so serious as they deemed it. "Not that I ever permitted myself to hold out hopes which might prove delusive," added he, "for I belong to a profession whose first maxim is, 'Nothing is certain.'"

Nor was it merely kind or complimentary they were; they were confidential. Vyner would sit down at the fire with him, and tell all the little family secrets that are usually reserved for the members themselves; and Georgina would join him in the garden, to explain how she long foresaw the infatuation of her brother-in-law, but was powerless to arrest it; and even Lady Vyner—the cold and distant Lady Vyner—informed him, in the strictest secrecy, that her dear mother had latterly taken a fondness for Malaga, and actually drank two full glasses of it every day more than the doctor permitted. What may not the man do in the household who is thus accepted and trusted? So, certainly, thought Mr. M'Kinlay, and as he strolled in the garden, apparently deep in thought over the Vyner complications, his real cares were, How was he himself to derive the fullest advantages of "the situation"?

"It is while towing the wreck into harbour the best bargain can be made for salvage," muttered M'Kinlay. "I must employ the present moments well, since, once reinstated in their old prosperity, the old pride is sure to return." He hesitated long what course to take. Prudence suggested the slow, cautious, patient approach; but then Miss Courtenay was one of those capricious natures whose sudden turns disconcert all regular siege. And, on the other hand, if he were to attempt a "surprise," and failed, he should never recover it. He had ascertained that her fortune was safe; he had also learned that Mrs. Courtenay had made a will in her favour, though to what precise amount he could not tell; and he fancied—nor was it mere fancy—that she inclined far more to his society than heretofore, and seemed to encourage him to a greater frankness than he had yet dared to employ in his intercourse with her.

Partly because of the arduous task of investigating Vyner's accounts, and partly that he was a man who required abundant time and quiet before he could make up his mind on any difficulty, he breakfasted alone in his own room, and rarely mixed with the family before dinner-hour. He knew well how all this seeming industry redounded to his credit; the little entreaties to him to take some fresh air, or take a walk or a drive, were all so many assurances of friendly interest in his behalf; and when Vyner would say, "Have a care, M'Kinlay; remember what's to become of *us* if you knock up," Lady Vyner's glance of gratitude, and Miss Courtenay's air of half confusion, were an incense that positively intoxicated him with ecstasy.

A short stroll in the garden he at last permitted himself to take, and of this brief period of relaxation he made a little daily history—one of those small jokes great men weave out of some little personal detail, which they have a conscious sense, perhaps, history will yet deal with more pompously.

"Five times from the orangery to the far summer-house to-day! There's dissipation for you," would he say, as he entered the drawing-room before dinner. "Really I feel like a pedestrian training for a race." And how pleasantly would they laugh at his drollery, as we all do laugh every day at some stupid attempt at fun by those whose services we stand in need of, flattering ourselves the while that our sycophancy is but politeness.

Vyner was absent one day, and Mr. M'Kinlay took the head of the table, and did the honours with somewhat more pretension than the position required, alluding jocularly to his high estate and its onerous responsibilities, but the ladies liked his pleasantry, and treasured up little details of it to tell Sir Gervais on his return.

When they left him to his coffee and his cigar on the terrace his feeling was little less than triumphant. "Yes," thought he, "I have won the race; I may claim the cup when I please." While he thus revelled, he saw, or fancied he saw, the flutter of a muslin dress in the garden beneath. Was it Georgina? Could it be that she had gone there designedly to draw him on to a declaration? If Mr. M'Kinlay appear to my fair readers less gallant than he might be, let them bear in mind that his years were not those which dispose to romance, and that he was only a "solicitor" by profession.

"Now or never, then," said he, finishing a second liqueur-glass of brandy, and descending the steps into the garden.

Though within a few days of Christmas, the evening was mild and even genial, for Chiavari is one of those sheltered nooks where the oranges live out of doors through the winter, and enjoy a climate like that of Naples. It was some time before he could detect her he was in search of, and at last came suddenly to where she was gathering some fresh violets for a bouquet.

"What a climate—what a heavenly climate this is, Miss Courtenay!" said he, in a tone purposely softened and subdued for the occasion; and she started and exclaimed,—

"Oh! how you frightened me, my dear M'Kinlay. I never heard you coming. I am in search of violets; come and help me, but only take the deep blue ones."

Now, if Mr. M'Kinlay had been perfectly sure—which he was not—that her eyes were blue, he would have adventured on a pretty compliment, but, as a lawyer, he knew the consequences of "misdescription," and he contented himself with expressing all the happiness he felt at being associated with her in any pursuit.

"Has my sister told you what Gervais has gone about?" asked she, still stooping to cull the flowers.

"Not a word of it."

"Then I will, though certainly you scarcely deserve such a proof of my confidence, seeing how very guarded you are as to your own secrets."

"I, my dear Miss Courtenay? I guarded! and towards *you?* I pray you tell me what you allude to."

"By-and-by, perhaps; for the present I want to speak of our own mysteries. Know, then, that my brother has gone to Genoa to bring back with him the young gentleman through whose means much of our late discovery has been made, and who turns out to be Mr. Luttrell. He was here for a couple of days already, but so overwhelmed by the news of his father's death that we scarcely saw anything of him. He then left us to go back and nurse his wounded friend, the captain, who insists, it seems, on being treated in the public hospital."

"Luttrell—Luttrell! You mean one of that family who lived on the rock off the Irish coast?"

"His son."

"The boy I remembered having rescued at the peril of my own life! I wonder will his memory recall it? And why is Sir Gervais——"

He stopped; he was about to ask what interest could attach to any one so devoid of fortune, friends, or station, and she saw the meaning of his question, and said, though not without a certain confusion,—

"My brother-in-law and this young man's father were once on a time very intimate; he used to be a great deal with us—I am speaking of very long ago—and then we lost sight of him. A remote residence and an imprudent marriage estranged him from us, and the merest accident led my brother to where he lived—the barren island you spoke of—and renewed in some sort their old friendship—in so far, at least, that Gervais promised to be the guardian of his friend's son——"

"I remember it all; I took a part in the arrangement."

"But it turns out there is nothing to take charge of. In a letter that my brother got from Mr. Grenfell some time since we find that Mr. Luttrell has left everything he possessed to a certain niece or daughter. Which was she, Mr. M'Kinlay?"

"Niece, I always understood."

"Which did you always believe?" said she, looking at him with a steady, unflinching stare.

"Niece, certainly."

"Indeed?"

"On my word of honour."

"And all this wonderful story about her beauty and captivation, and the running away, and the secret marriage, how much of *that* does Mr. M'Kinlay believe?"

"I don't know one word of what you allude to."

"Oh, Mr. M'Kinlay, this is more than lawyer-like reserve!"

"I will swear it, if you desire."

"But surely you'll not say that you did not dine with Sir Within Wardle at the Hotel Windsor, as you came through Paris?"

"I have not the slightest intention to deny it."

"And is it possible, Mr. M'Kinlay, that nothing of what I have just mentioned was dropped during the dinner? No allusion to the beautiful Miss Luttrell or Mrs. Ladarelle?—Mr. Grenfell is in doubt which to call her."

"Not a syllable; her name was never uttered."

"And what did you talk of, in Heaven's name!" cried she, impatiently. "Was it town gossip and scandal?"

For a moment Mr. M'Kinlay was almost scared by her impetuosity, but he rallied, and assured her that Sir Within spoke with the warmest interest of Sir Gervais, and alluded in the most cordial way to their old relations of friendship, and with what pleasure he would renew them. "He charged me with innumerable kind messages, and almost his last word was a hope that he should be fortunate enough to meet you again."

"And through all this no mention of the 'beauty'—I mean, of Miss Luttrell?"

"Not a word."

"How strange—how incomprehensible!" said she, pausing, and seeming to reflect.

"Remember, my dear Miss Courtenay, it was a very hurried meeting altogether. We dined at half-past six, and at ten I was on the railroad."

"Did Sir Within strike you as looking so very ill—so much cut up—as Mr. Grenfell phrases it?"

"I thought him looking remarkably well; for a man of his age, wonderfully well. He must be—let me see—he must be not very far from eighty."

"Not within ten years of it, sir, I'm confident," broke she in, almost fiercely. "There's no error more common than to overrate the age of distinguished men. The public infers that familiarity with their name implies long acquaintance, and it is a most absurd mistake."

Now, Mr. M'Kinlay thoroughly understood that he was typified under that same public, who only knew great men by report, and misrepresented them through ignorance. He was, however, so strong in "his brief" that he would not submit to be put down; he had taken pains to look over a record of Sir Within's services, and had seen that he was attached to the Russian embassy fifty-two years ago.

"What do you say to that, Miss Courtenay? Fifty-two years ago."

"I say, sir, that I don't care for arithmetic, and never settle any question by a reference to mere figures. When I last saw Sir Within he was in the prime of life, and if great social talents and agreeability were to be any test, one of the youngest persons of the company."

"Oh, I am the first to extol his conversational powers. He is a perfect mine of good stories."

"I detest good stories. I like conversation, I like reply, rejoinder, even amplification at times; anecdote is almost always a mistake."

Mr. M'Kinlay was aghast. How disagreeable he must have made himself, to render her so sharp and so incisive all at once.

"I can say all this to *you*," said she, with a sweet tone, "for it is a fault you never commit. And so you remark, that Sir Within showed no remarkable gloom or depression—nothing, in fact, that argued he had met with any great shock?"

"My impression was that I saw him in high spirits and in the best possible health."

"I thought so!" cried she, almost triumphantly. "I declare I thought so!" But why she thought so, or what she thought, or how it could be matter of such pleasure, she did not go on to explain. After a moment she resumed: "And was there nothing said about why he had left Dalradern, and what induced him to come abroad?"

"Nothing—positively nothing."

"Well," said she, with a haughty toss of her head, "it is very possible that the whole subject occupies a much larger space in Mr. Grenfell's letter than in Sir Within's mind; and, for my own part, I only inquired about the matter as it was once the cause of a certain coldness, a half estrangement between Dalradern and ourselves, and which, as my brother takes much pleasure in Sir Within's society, I rejoice to perceive exists no longer."

All this was a perfect riddle to Mr. M'Kinlay, who had nothing for it but to utter a wise sentiment on the happiness of reconciliation. Even this was unfortunate, for she tartly told him "that there could be no reconciliation where there was no quarrel;" and then dryly added, "Is it not cold out here?"

"I protest I think it delightful," said he.

"Well, then, it is damp, or it's something or other," said she, carelessly, and turned towards the house.

M'Kinlay followed her; gloomy enough was he. Here was the opportunity he had so long wished for, and what had he made of it? It had opened, too, favourably; their first meeting was cordial; had he said anything that might have offended her? or had he—this was his last thought as they reached the porch—had he *not* said what she expected he ought to have said? *That* supposition would at once explain her chagrin and irritation.

"Miss Georgina," said he, with a sort of reckless daring, "I have an entreaty to make of you — I ask a favour at your hands."

"It is granted, Mr. M'Kinlay," said she, smiling. "I guess it already."

"You guess it already, and you grant it!" cried he, in ecstasy.

"Yes," said she, still graciously, as she threw off her shawl. "You are impatient for your tea, and you shall have it at once."

And with that she moved hurriedly forward, and left him overwhelmed with shame and anger.

CHAPTER LXI.

MR. M'KINLAY'S "INSTRUCTIONS."

THE party at the Villa were seated at breakfast the following morning when Vyner arrived with his young guest—a fine, manly-looking, determined fellow, whose frank bearing and un-affected demeanour interested the ladies strongly in his favour at once; nor did the tone of sorrow and sadness in his manner detract from the good impression he produced. The tidings of his father's death had met him as he landed at Genoa, and overwhelmed him with affliction—such utter friendlessness was his —so bereft was he of all that meant kindred or relationship. His captain was, indeed, now all that remained to him, and he had nursed and tended him in his long illness with untiring devotion, insomuch, indeed, that it was with difficulty Vyner could persuade him to come down to the Boschetto for a few days to rally his strength and spirits by change of air and scene.

Sir Gervais had very early observed that the young sailor possessed the characteristic reserve of his family, and avoided, whenever possible, all reference to himself. Strange and eventful as his last few years had been, he never referred to them, or did so in that careless, passing way that showed he would not willingly make them matter to dwell upon; and yet, with all this, there was an openness when questioned, a frank readiness to answer whatever was asked, that plainly proved his reserve was mere shyness—the modest dislike to make himself or his story foreground objects.

Lady Vyner, not usually attracted by new acquaintances, liked him much, and saw him, without any motherly misgivings, constantly in Ada's society. They walked together over the olive hills and along the sea-shore every morning. Once or twice, too, they had taken out Vyner's little sail-boat, and made excursions to Sestri or to Recco; and in the grave, respectful, almost distant manner of Harry Luttrell, there seemed that sort of security which the mammas of handsome heiresses deem sufficient. Ada, too, frankness and honesty itself, spoke of him to her mother as a sister might have spoken of a dear brother. If he had been more confidential with her than with the others—and his confessions were even marked with a sort of strange deference, as though made to one who could not well realize to her mind the humble fortunes of a mere adventurer like himself—there was also a kind of rugged pride in the way he presented himself even in his character of a sailor—one who had not the slightest pretension to rank or condition whatever—that showed how he regarded the gulf between them.

It was strange, inexplicably strange, what distance separated him from Miss Courtenay. Neither would—perhaps neither could—make any advances to the other. "She is so unlike your mother, Ada," blurted he out one day, ere he knew what he had said. "He is painfully like his father," was Georgina's comment on himself.

"You have had a long visit from young Luttrell, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said she, on the day after his arrival, when they had been closeted together for nigh two hours.

"Yes, Sir Gervais begged me to explain to him some of the circumstances which led his father to will away the Arran property, and to inform him that the present owner was his cousin. I suspect Sir Gervais shrank fron the unpleasant task of entering upon the low connections of the family, and which, of course, gave *me* no manner of inconvenience. I told him who she was, and he remembered her at once. I was going on to speak of her having been adopted by your brother, and the other incidents of her childhood, but he stopped me by saying, 'Would it be possible to make any barter of the Roscommon property, which goes to the heir-at-law, and who is now myself, for the Arran estate, for I hold much to it?' I explained to him that his being alive broke the will, and that Arran was as much his as the rest of the estate. But he would not hear of this, and kept on repeating, 'My father gave it, and without she is disposed to part with it for a liberal equivalent, I'll not disturb the possession.'"

"The Luttrells were all so," said she; "half worldly, half romantic, and one never knew which side was uppermost."

"He means to go over to Arran; he wants to see the place where his father is buried. The pride of race is very strong in him, and the mere utterance of the word Luttrell brings it up in full force."

"What a pity she's married!" said she, insolently, but in so faint a voice he could not catch the words, and asked her to repeat them. "I was only talking to myself, Mr. M'Kinlay," said she.

"I pressed him," continued the other, "to give me some instructions, for I can't suppose he intends to let his fortune slip out of his hands altogether. I told him that it was as much as to impugn his legitimacy; and he gave me a look that frightened me, and, for a moment, I wished myself anywhere else than in the room with him. 'He must be something younger, and bolder, and braver than you, sir, that will ever dare to utter such a doubt as that,' said he; and he was almost purple with passion as he spoke."

"They are all violent; at least, they were!" said she, with a sneering smile. "I hope you encouraged the notion of going to Arran. I should be so glad if he were to do it at once."

"Indeed?"

"Can you doubt it, Mr. M'Kinlay? Is it a person so acute and observant as yourself need be told that my niece, Ada, should not be thrown into constant companionship with a young fellow whose very adventures impart a sort of interest to him?"

"But a sailor, Miss Courtenay!—a mere sailor!"

"Very well, sir; and a mere sailor, to a very young girl who has seen nothing of life, would possibly be fully as attractive as a member of Parliament. The faculty to find out what is suitable to us, Mr. M'Kinlay, does not usually occur in very early life."

There was a marked emphasis in the word "suitable" that made the old lawyer's heart throb fast and full. Was this thrown out for encouragement—was it to inspire hope, or suggest warning? What would he not have given to be certain which of the two it meant.

"Ah, Miss Courtenay," said he, with a most imploring look, "If I could only assure myself that in the words you have just spoken there lay one spark of hope—I mean, if I could but believe that this would be the proper moment——"

"My dear Mr. M'Kinlay, let me stop you. There are many things to be done before I can let you even finish your sentence; and mind me, sir, this 'without prejudice,' as you lawyers say, to my own exercise of judgment afterwards; and the first of these is to send this young man away. I own to you, frankly, he is no favourite of mine. I call ruggedness what *they* call frankness; and his pride of name and birth are, when unattached to either fortune or position, simply insufferable. Get rid of him; send him to Arran, if he won't go to Japan. *You* can do it without inhospitality, or even awkwardness. You can hint to him that people rarely remain beyond two or three days on a visit; that his intimacy with Ada gives pain, uneasiness to her family; that, in short, he ought to go. I know," added she, with a bewitching smile, "how little there is for me to instruct Mr. M'Kinlay on a point where tact and delicacy are the weapons to be employed. I feel all the presumption of such a pretence, and therefore I merely say, induce him to go his way, and let him do it in such guise that my brother may not suspect our interference."

"There is nothing I would not do, Miss Courtenay, with the mere possibility that you would deem it a service. All I ask is the assurance——"

"Must I stop you again?" said she, with a sweet smile. "Must I remind you that he who stipulates for his reward risks in some sort his character for generosity ,and, worse still, implies a distrust of the one he serves?"

"I am your slave, Miss Courtenay—your humble slave!" said he, bowing with a deep humility.

"It is what I intend you should be," muttered she to herself; and then added aloud, "Lose no time about this; my brother mentions that he accidently met Sir Within Wardle in the doorway of the hotel at Genoa; that they embraced most cordially, and parted with Sir Within's promise to come over and pass some days here, and I believe he may be expected to-morrow; and of course it would be more convenient to have this young man's room, all the more that Mr. Grenfell also is expected."

"I'll set about my negotiation at once."

"Don't call it negotiation, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay. It must be far more effectual and more peremptory. To present this sailor lad as an acquaintance to Sir Within would be monstrous. The pleasure of his visit will depend on his coming actually amongst all his old friends."

Ah, Mr. M'Kinlay, how your heart swelled proudly at that flattery! How exquisite it was to feel you were a member of an order to which, in your proudest day-dreams, you had not aspired!

"There now, you have your instructions. You'll find me here about four o'clock to report progress, or rather, as I trust, to announce success."

"I have an excellent opportunity," cried M'Kinlay, as she moved away. "He has asked me to go out fishing with him in the boat to-day. It will be just the time to fall into confidential discourse. At four expect me."

CHAPTER LXII.

FISHING IN TROUBLED WATERS

ON gaining the beach where he had appointed to meet Harry Luttrell, Mr. M'Kinlay discovered that his young friend had gone off already, taking Ada with him. He could, indeed, detect the form of a lady in the stern of the boat, as she slipped along over the calm sea, and mark that Luttrell was seated at her side.

Here was imprudence, rashness, wilful rashness, all the more reprehensible in a man like Vyner, who knew, or ought to know, the world by this time. "How is that sailor there to remember that he is only a sailor? and how is that young heiress to call to mind that she is an heiress? Why should people ever be placed in a position in which the impossible ceases to look impossible, and even gets a look of the probable?" Such were some of the wise reflections of the sage moralist, though it is but truth to say he never once thought of applying any one of them to his own case.

"What would Miss Courtenay say, too," thought he, "when she discovered that he had been so neglectful of the mission entrusted to him?" He looked about for another boat to go after them. It was a strong measure, but it was a time for strong measures. No boat, however, was to be had. He bethought him of hailing them, or trying to attract their attention by signals, and to this end he mounted a rock, and attaching his handkerchief to his umbrella, waved it frantically to and fro, screaming out, "Boat ahoy!" in a voice he meant to be intensely maritime.

"Shout away, old fellow!" muttered Harry, whose well-practised eye and ear detected the signal-maker. "I'm not going back for *you*."

"Do you see any one, Harry?" asked Ada. "Who is it?"

"That old lawyer—I forget his name, but he's the only creature in the house that I can't bear. You wouldn't believe it, but he came up to me yesterday evening and asked if I had any recollection of his having saved my life. But I stopped him full, for I said, 'I remember well how Captain Dodge picked me up off a spar at sea, and had to threaten to throw yourself overboard for opposing it.'"

"Well, but, Harry," said she, gently, "people don't say such unpleasant things—I mean, when they meet in the world; when thrown together in society they forgive little grudges, if they cannot forget them."

"Don't you know that we Luttrells do neither? I can no more forget a wrong than a kindness. Mind me, though," added he, quickly, "I do not ask to clear off scores with the lawyer, only let him not claim to make me his debtor. Shout away, it will stretch your lungs for the Old Bailey, or wherever it is that you make your living."

"If your memory be as good as you say, Harry," said she, smiling, "can you recall the time papa's yacht, the *Meteor*, anchored in the little bay at Arran?"

"I can. I remember it all."

"And how you came on board in one of our boats?"

"Ay, and how you called me Robinson. Don't get so red; I wasn't offended then, and I'm sure I'm not now. You said it in a whisper to your father, but I overhead you; and I think I said I should like well to be Robinson Crusoe, and have an island all my own."

"And so you have. Arran is yours."

"No. Arran was mine, or ought to have been mine, but my father, believing me dead, left it to my cousin."

"Oh, how I long to see her again!" cried Ada, passionately. "You know how we were brought up together."

"Your father told me all about it; but I never well understood how or why she was sent away again. Were you disappointed in her?"

"Oh, no, no. Nothing of the kind. She was cleverer, and more beautiful, and more attractive, than any one could have anticipated. The lesson that would take me days to learn, she had but to glance at and she knew it. The governess was in despair how to keep in advance of her. And then there was a charm in her manner that made the veriest trifle she did a sort of fascination."

"And were these the traits to send back into hardship and barbarism?"

"To this very hour I never knew how or why she went back, nor to what she went. I must tell you a secret, a great secret it is, Harry, and you will promise never to reveal it." He nodded, and she went on, "Aunt Georgina never liked Kate. She could not help owning that she was very beautiful, and very gifted, and very graceful, but nothing would wring from her one word of affection, nor even a smile of kindly meaning."

"It is exactly how she treats me. She is all courtesy and politeness: but it is a courtesy that chills me to the heart, and ever seems to say, "Don't forget the distance that separates us.' Perhaps," added he, laughing, "my cousin Kate and I have some family resemblance to each other?"

"Don't indulge any such flattery, Harry," said she, laughing. "Kate was beautiful."

"Come, come, I never meant in face. I only suspected that it was the marvellous gift of fascination we held in common." And he laughed good-humouredly at his own expense. "But to be serious. Was it quite fair to send such a girl as you have described back to all the miseries and sufferings of a peasant's life?"

"I'm not sure that this was done. I mean, that after she went to live at Dalradern—for Sir Within Wardle became her guardian when we came abroad I never knew what happened; my Aunt Georgina actually forbade the merest mention of her."

"I wonder would she tell me why, if I were to ask her."

"Oh, Harry, I implore you not to do so. It would be at once to betray the confidence I have placed in you. She would know, who had told you of her dislike to Kate."

"The lawyer could tell it, I'm certain," muttered Harry; "that fellow watches us all. I have marked him, as we sat in the drawing-room, studying the looks of each in turn, and pausing over chance words, as if they could mean more than they seemed to say."

"How acute you want to be thought!" said she, laughing.

"I have sailed in two ships where the crews mutinied, Miss Ada, and a man learns to have his wits about him where he suspects mischief, after that. There! look at the lawyer in the boat; he has got a boat at last, and is going to give us chase. Shall we run for it, Ada, or stand and fight him?"

"What wickedness are you muttering under your breath, there, sir?" asked she, with a mock imperiousness.

"Well, I was just saying to myself that, if you hadn't been here, I'd even run foul of him and upset us both. I'd like to see the old fellow in the water. Oh! I see I must behave well. Miss Courtenay is in the boat too!"

"Which means a reproof to me, Harry. My aunt never comes out on any less solemn mission."

"And why a reproof? What have you done?"

"Have I not gone off sailing all alone with that wild scamp Harry Luttrell—that buccaneer who respects neither laws nor proprieties! But that's my aunt's voice! What is she saying?"

"She's telling the lawyer that it's all his fault, or Sir Gervais's fault, or somebody's fault, and that it's a shame and disgrace, and I don't know well what else besides."

"What can it be?"

"Just what you said a minute ago. There! I'll wait for them. I'll slack off and let them come up."

Whatever might have been the rebukeful tone of Miss Courtenay's voice a few moments before, now, as the boat drew up beside Luttrell's, her tones were softened and subdued, and it was with her most silvery accent she told Ada that some visitors had just arrived, and begged her to return with her to receive them, while Mr. M'Kinlay would join Mr. Luttrell, and obtain the lesson in sea-fishing he was so eager for.

"Come along," said Harry. "It looks fresh outside, and may turn out a nice mackerel day, calm as it seems here."

"With your good leave, sir, I shall decline a nice mackerel day. I'm a very fair-weather sailor."

A hurried whisper from Georgina seemed, however, to arrest him in his excuses, and she added aloud,—

"Of course Mr. Luttrell has no intention of venturing out to sea farther than you like, sir. He goes for your pleasure and amusement, and not to educate you for the Navy."

Another hurried whisper followed this pert speech, and poor M'Kinlay, with the air of a condemned man, stepped into Luttrell's boat with a heavy sigh, and a look of positive misery.

"No, no, not on any account," were the last words of Ada into Harry's ear, as he helped her to her place.

"Remember, we dine at six!" said Georgina, as she waved them an adieu; and young Luttrell cried out, "All right!" as he slacked off his sheet, and let the boat run broad and full towards the open sea.

"It *is* fresher, far fresher than I thought!" said M'Kinlay, whose transition from a row-boat to a sailing one imparted the impression of a strong breeze.

"Cat's-paws! light airs of wind that die away every moment. But I see it looks bluer out yonder, and now and then I see a white curl on the water that may mean a little wind."

"Then I beseech you, sir, let us keep where we are!"

"Don't you want me to teach you something about fishing? You said you wished to know what 'trawling' meant."

"Not to-day; not on this occasion, my young friend. It was another errand brought me here this morning. Could you not draw that thing a little closer, and do something to make us go somewhat steadier?"

"I'll close haul, if you prefer it," said Harry, taking a strong pull at the sheet, and, with his helm hard up, sending the skiff along under a full wind. She leaned over so much, too, that it required all M'Kinlay's strength, with both arms outside the gunwale, to keep his position. "That's pleasanter, ain't it?" asked Harry.

"I'll not say I like it, either."

"You will when the wind steadies; it's squally just now, and she feels it, for she has no keel."

"No keel! And ought she to have a keel!"

"Well, I think she'd be the better of one," said Harry, smiling.

"Let us get back, sir—let us get back at once! This is the reverse of agreeable to me; I don't understand, and I don't enjoy it. Put me ashore anywhere, and leave me to find my way how I can. There—yonder, where you see the rocks—land me there!"

"If I tried it, you'd find your way sure enough, but it would be into the next world! Don't you see the white line there! Those are breakers!"

"Then turn back, sir, I command—I implore you," cried he, with a voice shaking with terror.

"I'll put about when the wind slackens. I can't do it just yet. Have a little patience. Take the rudder a moment."

"No, sir; I refuse—I decidedly refuse. I protest against any share in what may happen."

"Perhaps it will be past protesting if you don't do what I tell you. Hold this, and mind my orders. Keep the tiller so till I cry out hard down; mind me, now—no mistake." And not waiting for more, he sprang into the bow of the boat as she ran up into the wind, and held out the foresail to the breeze. "Down helm—hard down!" cried he; and round she spun at once, and so rapidly, that the lee gunwale went under water, and M'Kinlay, believing she had upset, uttered one wild cry and fell senseless into the bottom of the boat. Not much grieved at his condition—perhaps, on the whole, almost glad to be rid of his company—Harry lighted a cigar and steered for shore. In less than half an hour they gained the slack water of the little bay, and M'Kinlay, gathering himself up, asked if they were nigh land.

"Close in; get up and have a cigar," said Harry, curtly.

"No, sir; I will not."

"I thought you liked a weed," said Harry, carelessly.

"My likings or my dislikings must be a matter of perfect indifference to you, sir, or I should not be wet to the skin and shivering as I am now."

"Take a go of brandy, and you'll be all right," said Harry, throwing his flask to him.

Though not very graciously offered, M'Kinlay accepted the dram, and then looked over the side towards the shore with an air of greater contentment. "Considering, sir, that I came here to-day on *your* account, I think I might have been treated with somewhat more deference to my tastes," said he, at last.

"On *my* account? And in what way on *my* account?"

"If we are not likely to have any more storms of wind, I can perhaps tell you."

"No, no, it's still as a fishpond here. Go on."

"Before I go on—before I even begin, Mr. Luttrell, I must have your promise that you will not mention to any one what shall pass between us to-day. It is on a subject which concerns *you*—but still concerns others more nearly."

"All right. I'll not speak of it."

"You will give me your word?"

"I *have* given it. Didn't you hear me say I'd not speak of it?"

"Well, sir, the matter is this: Great uneasiness is being felt here at the intimacy that has grown up between you and Miss

Vyner. Motives of extreme delicacy towards *you*—who, of course, not having lived much in the world, could not be expected to weigh such considerations—but motives of great delicacy, as I say, have prevented any notice being taken of this intimacy, and a hope has been felt that you yourself, once awakened to the fact of the long interval that separates *her* condition from *yours*, would soon see the propriety, indeed the necessity, of another line of conduct, and thus not require what may seem an admonition, though I really intend you should receive it as the warning counsel of a friend."

"Have you been commissioned to say this to me?" asked Luttrell, haughtily.

"Though I had decided with myself not to answer any questions, I will reply to this one—and this only. I have."

"Who gave you this charge?"

M'Kinlay shook his head, and was silent.

"Was it Sir Gervais Vyner?"

Another shake of the head was the reply.

"I thought not. I am certain, too, it was not Lady Vyner. Be frank, sir, and tell me candidly. It was Miss Courtenay employed you on this errand?"

"I really see no necessity for any explanation on my part, Mr. Luttrell. I have already transgressed the limits of mere prudence in the avowal I have made you. I trust you will be satisfied with my candour."

"Let me ask for a little more of that same candour. I want to know what is expected of me. What I am to do?"

"Really, sir, you make my position a very painful one. You insist upon my being extremely disagreeable to you."

"Listen to reason. I am telling you that I found myself in considerable embarrassment, and I entreat of you, as a favour, to show me the way out of it. Am I to discontinue all intimacy with Miss Vyner? Am I to avoid her? Am I to leave this and not return?"

"That I opine to be the most fitting course under the circumstances," said M'Kinlay, bowing.

"I see," said Harry, pondering for some seconds—"I see." And then, with a more fervid manner, resuming, "But if I know, sir—if I feel—that all this caution is unnecessary, that I have not—that I never had—the slightest pretensions such as you speak of, that Miss Vyner's manner to me, in its very freedom, repels any suspicion of the kind,—I ask you, is it not a little hard to deny me the greatest happiness I have ever tasted in life—the first holiday after a long spell of work and hardship? Why should I not go straight to Sir Gervais and say this?"

"You forget your promise to yourself."

"Ay, to be sure, *that* is a barrier. I suppose you are right. The best, the only way, is to go off; and I own I feel ashamed to make this return for all the generous kindness I have met here; and what an insufferable coxcomb must it stamp me, if it ever comes out that I left on such grounds as these."

"That is not how the world regards such things, sir. Men are not supposed to measure their affections by their circumstances. If it were so, we should not see so many *mésalliances*."

"I don't know how to go about it. I'm a precious bungler at making excuses, and, whenever I have told a lie in my life, my own shame and confusion have always convicted me; help me to some ingenious pretext for a sudden departure."

"You can have law business. Your agents wish to see you."

"But I have no property, or next to none. No, no, that won't do."

"You desire to visit your friends in Ireland."

"Just as bad. I have as little friends as fortune. Try again."

"Why should not Captain Dodge have sent for you? you left him very ill, and confined to bed, I understand."

"He told Sir Gervais to keep me as long as possible; that the air of the hospital was bad for me, and had brought back my ague."

"If you are so very scrupulous, sir, as to what people generally regard as a mere conventionality, I should say, pack up and be off without any explanation at all."

"I believe you are right. It is the old story of paying one's debts with the topsail sheet. Shabby enough, too, but it can't be helped. Perhaps, Mr. M'Kinlay, if occasion should occur, you would find means to let Sir Gervais know that I am not the ungrateful dog my want of manners might bespeak me; perhaps you would convey to him that this step of mine had been suggested by yourself."

"It is possible, Mr. Luttrell, that a fortuitous moment for an explanation of the kind you mention might occur, and, if so, you may rely on my willingness to profit by it. You mean to go at once?"

"I suppose so. Is it not what you advise?"

"Most certainly."

"Here goes, then! I'll start this instant. They are all out driving, except Miss Courtenay. I see her in the garden yonder. She, I know, will forgive me my abrupt departure, and you'll make the best story you can out of it, Mr. M'Kinlay. As I was last seen in your company, you'll be obliged, for your own sake, to say something plausible."

"I will do my best, sir. The eccentric habits of a sea-life must bear the burden of the explanation."

"It's poor comfort that I can't be much missed! Good-bye!" And, without any more cordial leave-taking, Luttrell turned into a side-path that led directly to the house, while M'Kinlay entered the garden and made straight for the sea wall, on which Miss Courtenay was sitting, awaiting him.

"Well?" said she, impatiently, as he came forward—"well?"

"It is done—all finished!"

"In what way? How is it finished?"

"He goes away—goes at once!"

"Of course he writes a note, and makes some sort of excuse to my brother-in-law for his hurried departure?"

"I believe not. I fear—that is, I apprehend—he is one of those not very tractable people who always do an awkward thing in the awkwardest way; for when I explained to him that his position here was—what shall I say?—an indiscretion, and that Miss Vyner's friends saw with uneasiness the growing intimacy between them——"

"You did not speak of me—you did not mention my name, I hope?" broke she in, in an imperious tone.

"You could not suppose me guilty of such imprudence, Miss Courtenay!" said he, in an offended manner.

"No matter what I suppose, sir. I want you to tell me that my name was not uttered during your interview."

"Not by *me*—certainly not by *me!*" said he, timidly.

"Was it by *him*, sir? Answer me that!"

"Well, I rather think that he did say that I had been deputed by you to convey the message to him."

"What insolence! And how did you reply?"

"I observed that I was not there exactly for the purpose of a cross-examination; that in my capacity as a friendly adviser, I declined all interrogation."

"Fiddle faddle, sir. It would have been far more to the purpose to have said, 'Miss Courtenay has nothing whatever to do with this communication.' I really feel ashamed to think I should play the prompter to a professor in subtleties; but I still think that your ingenuity might have hit upon a reason for his going, without any reference to *us*, or to *our* wishes. Did it never occur to you, for instance, that the arrival of Sir Within Wardle might offer a convenient plea?"

"Indeed! I might have mentioned that," said he, in some confusion. "The house does not admit of much accommodation for strangers, and an additional room would be of consequence just now."

"I think, sir," said she, haughtily, "you might have put the matter in a better light than by making it a domestic question. This young man might have been brought to see that the gentleman who was so ungratefully treated—I might say, so shamefully treated—by his near relative, could not be the pleasantest person for him to meet in a narrow family circle."

"I might. It is quite true, I might have insinuated that consideration," said he, with a crestfallen air and look.

"I suppose you did your best, sir!" said she, with a sigh; and he felt all the sarcastic significance of its compassion. "Indeed, I am certain you did, and I thank you." With these words, not conveyed in any excess of warmth or gratitude, she moved away, and M'Kinlay stood a picture of doubt, confusion, and dismay, muttering to himself some unintelligible words, whose import was, however, the hope of that day coming when these and many similar small scores might be all wiped out together.

CHAPTER LXIII.

WITH LAWYERS.

"WHAT! that you, Harry? How comes it you have left all the fine folk so soon?" cried Captain Dodge, as he suddenly awoke and saw young Luttrell at his bedside. "Why, lad, I didn't expect to see you back here these ten days to come. Warn't they polite and civil to you?"

"That they were. They could not have treated me better if I had been their own son."

"How comes it, then, that you slipped your moorings?"

"Well, I can't well say. There were new guests just arriving, and people I never saw, and so, with one thing or other, I thought I'd just move off; and—and—here I am."

It was not difficult to see that this very lame excuse covered some other motive, and the old skipper was not the man to be put off by a flimsy pretext; but, rough sailor and buccaneer as he was, he could respect the feelings that he thought might be matter of secret meaning, and merely said: "I'm glad to see you back, at all events. I have no one to speak to in this place, and, as I lie here, I get so impatient, that I forget my smashed thigh-bone, and want to be up and about again."

"So you will, very soon, I hope."

"Not so soon, lad!" said he, sorrowfully. "It's a big spar to splice, the surgeon says, and will take three months; though how I'm to lie here three months is more than I can tell."

"I'll do my best to make it endurable for you. I'll get books—they've plenty of books here—and maps, and drawings; and I saw a draught-board this morning, and you'll see the time won't hang so heavily as you feared."

"That ain't it at all, Harry. You've got to go to Liverpool, to Towers and Smales—them's the fellows know me well. Smales sailed with me as a youngster, and you'll hand them a letter I'll write, and they'll look about for the sort of craft we're wanting—something bark-rigged, or a three-masted schooner. I was dreaming of one last night—such a clipper on a wind! The French are blockading Vera Cruz just now, and if we could slip past them and get in, one trip would set us all right again."

"I think I should like that well!" cried the youth.

"Like it! Why wouldn't you like it? There ain't nothing to compare with blockade running in this life: stealing carefully up till you see the moment to make a dash—watching your wind, and then with every inch of canvas you can spread, go at it till the knee timbers crack again, and the planks work and writhe like the twigs of a wicker basket, and all the ships of war flying this signal and that to each other, till at last comes a gun across your bows, and you run up a flag of some sort—English belike, for the French never suspect John Bull of having a clipper. Then comes the order to round to, and you pretend to mind it; and just as they man their boat, dead at them you go, swamp every man of them, and hold on, while they fire away, at the risk of hulling each other, and never take more notice of them than one discharge from your pivot-gun, just by way of returning their salute. That's what I call sport, boy; and I only wish I was at it this fine morning."

"And what happens if you're taken?"

"That depends on whether you showed fight or not: if you fired a shotted gun, they hang you."

Luttrell shook his head, and muttered, "A dog's death; I don't like that."

"That's prejudice, sir; nothing more. Every death a man meets bravely is a fine death! I'd just as lieve be hanged as flayed alive by the Choctaws!"

"Perhaps so would I."

"Well, there's what you've got to do. Towers and Smales, ship-builders!—they're the men to find what we want, and they know a clipper well; they've built more slavers than any house in the trade."

Harry made a wry face; the skipper saw it, and said: "There's more prejudice; but when you've been at sea as long as I have, you'll think less about the cargo than what you get per ton for the freight."

"I'd not turn slaver, anyhow; that much I can tell you," said he, stoutly.

"I'd not do it myself, sir, except when business was slack and freights low. It ain't cheering, noways; and there's a certain risk in it besides. Towers and Smales—Towers and Smales!" muttered he over to himself three or four times. "They'd not be the men they are to-day, I can tell you, if they never traded in ebony ware! Had you any talk with your grand friend, Sir Gervais, about that loan he offered me?" asked he, after a pause.

"Not a word. I came away hurriedly. I had no good opportunity to speak about it."

"He said, 'Two thousand, and pay when I like;' not hard terms certainly."

"And yet I'd rather you'd not accept them," said Harry, slowly.

"Not take money without interest charged or security asked? What do you mean?"

"I mean, I'd rather you'd wait till I've seen those lawyers that managed my father's affairs, and see whether they can't sell that trifle of property that comes to me."

"Why, didn't you tell me your father willed it away to some peasant girl?"

"Yes, the island, for the entail had been broken by my grandfather, but the small estate in Roscommon goes to the next-of-kin, and that happens to be myself. It must be very little worth, but it may help us at least to get a ship, and we'll soon do the rest ourselves."

"That will we, Harry. This is the fourth time in my life I've had to begin all over again, and I'm as fresh for it as on the first day."

They went on now to talk of the future and all their plans like men who felt the struggle with life a fair stand-up fight, that none with a stout heart ought ever to think of declining. The skipper had not only been in every corner of the globe, but had brought back from each spot some memories of gain, or pleasure, or peril—sensations pretty much alike to his appreciation—and whether he commanded a whale-boat at Behring's Straits, or took in his ship store of cocoa-nuts and yams at the Spice Islands, adventure ever tracked his steps. Dashed with the love of danger was the love of gain, and in his narrative one never could say whether there prevailed more of the spirit of enterprise or the temper of the trader.

"We'll want that loan from Vyner yet, I see, Harry," said he, at the end of a long calculation of necessary outgoings; "and I see no reason against taking it."

"I do, though," said the other, gravely.

"Mayhap some sentimental reason that I'd not give a red cent for, boy. What is it?"

"I'll not trouble you with the sentimental reasons," said Luttrell, smiling, "though perhaps I'm not without some of them. What I'll give you will suffice. While I was one morning with Sir Gervais, going over all about my father and his affairs, of which he knew far more than I did, he opened his writing-desk, and took out a great mass of letters. 'These,' said he, 'are in your father's hand; read them, and you'll be better acquainted with him than you have yet been.' They were on all manner of themes—of society, field sports, books, and much about politics—and interested me vastly, till at last I came upon one which certainly Sir Gervais would not have suffered me to see had he been aware it was amongst them. It was the last letter my father had ever written to him, and was almost entirely about myself. He spoke of the semi-barbarism I had been reared in, and the humble prospects before me, and he told about my disposition, and my faults of temper—the old family faults, he called them—that made us all 'intractable to our friends, and intolerable to all who were not friends.' At the end he asked Vyner to be my guardian, and he added these words: 'Be a friend to my boy in all ways that your kindness, your sympathy, your counsel can dictate. Guide, direct, encourage, or, if need be, reprove him, but never, whatever you do, aid him with your purse. It is on this condition I commit him to you. Remember.'"

"Well, I'd be no ways obliged to *my* father if he had made any such condition about *me*. I've never been much the better for all the good advice I've got, but I've found the man that lent me a thousand dollars uncommon useful."

"I am telling you of what my father wished and asked for," said Harry, proudly, "not of anything else."

"And that's just what I'm objectin' to, youngster. It was *his* pride to take no help, and it brought him to live and die on a barren rock in the ocean; but *I* don't intend to do that, nor to let you do it. We've got to say to the world, 'Sheer off there, I'm a-comin', and I mean comin' when I say it. There's maybe room enough for us all, but I'll be smashed and chawed up but I'll have room for *me!*'"

Whether it was the fierce energy with which he spoke this, or the fact that in a few rough words he had embodied his whole theory of life, but certainly Harry looked at him with a sort of wonder blended with amusement.

"Besides this," resumed Dodge, with the same decision of tone, "your father might say, if he pleased, 'You shan't help Harry Luttrell,' but he never could say, 'You mustn't help Herodotus Dodge.' No, sir!"

"At all events," said Harry, "you'll let me try my own plan first. If that fail, there will be time enough to consider the other. I'll start to-night for Liverpool. After I have seen your friends there, I'll go over and consult my lawyers in Dublin; and I mean to run across and see Arran—the old rock—once more. It shall be my last look at it."

"It ain't a beauty, that's a fact," said Dodge, who saw nothing of the agitation in the other's voice or manner. "Give me an hour or two, and I'll write the letters for you, and I'll tell Smales that if you want any money—"

"I shall not want it."

"Then you'll be unlike any other man that ever wore shoes, sir, that's all!" And Dodge stuffed a formidable piece of tobacco into his mouth, as though to arrest his eloquence and stop the current of his displeasure, while Harry waved him a good-bye, and went out.

The same evening he started for Liverpool. The skipper's friends were most cordial and hospitable to him. They had had long dealings with Dodge, and found him ever honourable and trustworthy, and Harry heard with sincere pleasure the praises of his friend. It was evident, too, that they were taken with young Luttrell, for they brought him about amongst their friends, introducing him everywhere, and extending to him every hospitality of their hospitable city. If Harry was very grateful for all this kindness, his mind continually reverted to the society he had so lately mixed in, and whose charm he appreciated, new as he was to life and the world, with an intense zest—the polished urbanity of Sir Gervais; the thoughtful good nature of Lady Vyner; the gentle gracefulness of Ada; even Miss Courtenay—no favourite of his, nor he of hers—yet even she possessed a winning elegance of manner that was very captivating.

Very unlike all these were the attentions that now surrounded him, and many were the unfavourable comparisons he drew between his present friends and their predecessors. Not that he was in love with Ada: he had asked himself the question more than once, and always had he given the same answer: "If I had been a man of rank and fortune, I'd have deemed my lot perfect to have had such a sister." And really it was sister-like she had been to him; so candid, so frank, so full of those little cares that other "love" shrinks from, and dares not deal in. She had pressed him eagerly, too, to accept assistance from her father—a step she never could have taken had love been there—and he had refused on grounds which showed he could speak with a frankness love cannot speak.

"I take it," muttered he to himself one day, after long reflection—"I take it that my Luttrell blood moves too slowly for passionate affection, and that the energy of my nature must seek its exercise in hatred, not love; and if this be so, what a life is before me!"

At last the ship-builders discovered the craft that Dodge was in search of. She was a slaver recently captured off Bahia, and ordered to be sold by the Admiralty. A few lines from Harry described her with all the enthusiasm that her beauty and fine lines could merit, and he smiled to himself as he read over the expressions of admiration which no loveliness in human form could have wrung from him.

He sailed for Ireland on the night he wrote, but carried his letter with him, to relate what he might have to say of his meeting with his lawyer. A little event that occurred at his landing was also mentioned:—

"As I was stepping into the boat that was to take me ashore, we were hailed by a large ship-rigged vessel just getting under weigh, and from which several boats, crowded with people, were just leaving. We rowed towards her, and found that they wanted us to take on shore a young lady whose class evidently prevented her mixing with the vulgar herd that filled the other boats. She was in deep mourning, and so overwhelmed with grief, that she was almost unconscious as they lifted her into the boat. I caught a mere glimpse of her face, and never saw anything so beautiful in my life. Only think! the vessel was a convict-ship, and she had gone there to take a last farewell of some father or brother, perhaps—husband it could scarcely be, she was too young for that. Can you imagine anything more dreadful? One evidently of rank and birth—there were unmistakable signs of both about her—mixing even for an instant with all the pollution of crime and wickedness that crowd the deck of a convict ship! I asked leave to accompany her to her house or hotel, or wherever she was going, but she made a gesture of refusal; and, though I'd have given more than I dare tell to have known more about her, I thought it would be so unworthy to follow her, that I left her the moment we landed, and never saw her more.

"I am sure I did what was right and becoming, but if you knew how sorry I am to have been obliged to do it—if you knew how, now that it is all done and passed, I think of her incessantly—ay, and follow every one I see in mourning till I discover that it is not she—you'd wonder what change has come over this thick blood of mine, and set it boiling and bubbling as it never used to do."

He went on next to tell of his visit to the agents of his father's property. Messrs. Cane and Carter had been duly apprised by Sir Gervais Vyner that Harry Luttrell was alive, and it scarcely needed the letter which he carried as a credential, to authenticate him, so striking was the resemblance he bore to his father.

"You should have been here yesterday, Mr. Luttrell," said Cane. "You would have met your cousin. She has left this for Arran this morning."

Harry muttered something about their not being known to each other, and Cane continued:—

"You'd scarcely guess what brought her here. It was to make over to you, as the rightful owner, the property on the Arran Islands. We explained to her that it was a distinct deed of gift—that your late father bequeathed it to her as a means of support—for she has really nothing else—and that legally her claim was unassailable. She was not to be shaken from her resolution. No matter how we put the case—either as one of law or as one of necessity, for it is a necessity—her invariable reply was, 'My mind is made up, and on grounds very different from any you have touched on;' and she left us with full directions to make the requisite conveyances of the estate in your favour. I entreated her to defer her final determination for a week or two, and all I could obtain was a promise that if she should change her mind between that time and the day of signing the papers, she would let me know it. She has also given us directions about taking a passage for her to Australia; she is going out to seek occupation as a governess if she can, as a servant if she must."

Harry started, and grew pale and red by turns as the other said this. He thought, indeed, there was some want of delicacy in thus talking to him of one so nearly allied to him. His ignorance of life, and the Irish attachment to kindred together, made him feel the speech a hard one.

"How will it be, sir," asked he, curtly, "if I refuse to accept this cession?"

"The law has no means of enforcing it, sir. There is no statute which compels a man to take an estate against his will. She, however, can no more be bound to retain, than you to receive, this property."

"We had three hours' talk," said Harry, in writing this to

Captain Dodge, "and I ascertained that this very property she is now so anxious to be free of, had formed up to this the pride and enjoyment of her life. She had laboured incessantly to improve it and the condition of the people who lived on it. She had built a schoolhouse and a small hospital, and strange enough, too, a little inn, for the place was in request with tourists, who now found they could make their visits with comfort and convenience. Cane also showed me the drawing of a monument to my father's memory, the 'Last Luttrell of Arran,' she called him; and I own I was amazed at the simple elegance and taste of the design made by this poor peasant girl. Even if all these had not shown me that our old home has fallen into worthy hands, I feel determined not to be outdone in generosity by this daughter of the people. She shall see that a Luttrell understands his name and his station. I have told Cane to inform her that I distinctly refuse to accept the cession; she may endow her school or her hospital with it; she may partition it out amongst the cottier occupiers; she may leave it—I believe I said so in my warmth—to be worked out in masses for her soul—if she be still a Catholic—if all this while none of her own kith and kin are in want of assistance; and certainly times must have greatly changed with them if it be not so. At all events, I'll not accept it.

"I own to you I was proud to think of the high-hearted girl, bred up in poverty, and tried by the terrible test of 'adoption' to forget her humble origin. It was very fine and very noble of her, and only that I fear if I were to see her the illusion might be destroyed, and some coarse-featured, vulgar creature rout for ever the pleasant image my mind has formed, I'd certainly make her a visit. Cane presses me much to do so, but I will not. I shall go over to the island to see the last resting-place of my poor father, and then leave it for ever. I have made Cane give me his word of honour not to divulge my secret, nor even admit that he has more than seen me, and I intend to-morrow to set out for Arran.

"I asked Cane, when I was leaving him, what she was like, and he laughingly answered, "Can't you imagine it?' And so I see I was right. They were a wild, fierce, proud set, all these of my mother's family, with plenty of traditions amongst them of heavy retributions exacted for wrongs, and they were a strong, well-grown, and well-featured race, but, after all, not the stuff of which ladies and gentlemen are made, in *my* country at least. *You* have told me a different story as regards *yours*.

"You shall hear from me from the island if I remain there longer than a day, but, if my present mood endure, that event is very unlikely."

CHAPTER LXIV.

ON THE ISLAND.

It was late at night when Harry landed on Arran. Dark as it was, however, his sailor's eye could mark that the little jetty was in trim order, and that steps now led down to the water where formerly it was necessary to clamber over rugged rocks and slippery seaweed. A boatman took his carpet-bag as matter of course, too, as he stepped on shore, and trifling as was the service, it had a certain significance as to the advance of civilization in that wild spot. More striking, again, than these was the aspect of the comfortable little inn into which he was ushered. Small and unpretending, indeed, but very clean, and not destitute of little ornaments, sketches of the scenery of the island, and specimens of ore, or curious rock, or strange fern, that were to be found there. A few books, too, were scattered about, some of them presents from former visitors, with graceful testimonies of the pleasure they had found in the trip to Arran, and how gratefully they cherished the memory of its simple people.

Harry amused himself turning over these, as he sat at the great turf fire waiting for his supper. Of those who served him there was not one he recognized. Their looks and their language bespoke them as belonging to the mainland, but they spoke of the island with pride, and told how, in the season, about July or August, as many as fifteen or twenty strangers occasionally came over to visit it.

"There *was* a day," said the man, "in the late Mr. Luttrell's time, when nobody dare come here; he'd as soon see ould Nick as a stranger; and if a boat was to put in out of bad weather or the like, the first moment the wind would drop ever so little, down would come a message to tell them to be off."

Harry shook his head; an unconscious protest of dissent it was, but the other, interpreting the sign as condemnation, went on:—

"Ay, he was a hard man! But they tell me it wasn't his fault; the world went wrong with him, and he turned against it."

"He had a son, hadn't he?" asked Harry.

"He had, sir. I never saw him, but they tell me he was a fine boy, and when he was only ten years old, got a broken arm fighting with a seal in one of the caves on the shore; and, what's more, he didn't like to own it, because the seal got away from him.

"What became of him?"

"He was lost at sea, sir. I believe he turned pirate or slaver himself, and it was no great matter what became of him. They were all unlucky, men and women. No one ever heard of a Luttrell coming to good yet."

"That's a hard sentence."

"You'd not think so, sir, if you knew them; at least, so the men tell me about here. They liked the man that was here last well enough, but they said that nothing he could do would ever prosper."

"And who owns it now?"

"Kitty O'Hara that was—Neal O'Hara's daughter—he that was transported long ago—she's now the mistress of the whole island, and her name—she took it by his will—is Luttrell—Luttrell of Arran?"

"Do the people like her?"

"Why wouldn't they like her? Isn't she working and slaving for them all day long, nursing them at the hospital, visiting them in their cabins, teaching them in the school, getting them seed potatoes from Belmullet, and hasn't she set up a store there on the shore, where they can buy pitch, and hemp, and sailcloth, and all kinds of cordage, for less than half what it costs at Castlebar?"

"How has she money to do all this?"

"Just because she lives like the rest of us. Sorrow bit better dinner or supper she has, and it's a red cloak she wears, like Molly Ryan, and she makes her own shoes, and purtier ones you never looked at."

"And who taught her to manage all this so cleverly?"

"She taught herself out of books; she reads all night through. Come here, now, sir! Do you see that light there? That's her window, and there she'll be till, maybe, nigh five o'clock, studyin' hard. Molly says there's nights she never goes to bed at all."

"That light comes from the tower."

"So it does, sir, however you knew it," said the man; "but it was the favourite room of him that's gone, and she always sits there."

"And are strangers permitted to see the Abbey?" asked Harry.

"Yes, sir. All they've to do is to write their names in this book and send up a message that they want to see the place, and they'd see every bit of it but the two little rooms Mr. Luttrell that was used to keep for himself."

"And if one wished to see these also?"

"He couldn't do it, that's all; at least, *I*'d not be the man that axed her leave!"

"Take my name up there in the morning," said Harry as he wrote "H. Hamilton" in the book, that being a second name by which he was called after his father, though he had long ceased to use it.

The supper made its appearance at this moment, and little other conversation passed between them. As the man came and went, however, he continued to speak of Miss Luttrell, and all she had done for the people, in terms of warmest praise, winding up all with the remark, "That no one who had not lived the life of hardship and struggle of a poor person could ever be able to know what were the wants that press hardest—what the privations that cut deepest into the nature of the poor. And that's the reason," he said, "that she'll never let any one be cruel to the children, for it was as a child herself she knew sorrow!"

Long after the man had left him, Harry sat at the fire thinking over all he had heard. Nor was it, let us own, without a certain irritation that he thought of the contrast the man drew between his father and this girl—his father, the man of mind and intellect, the scholar, the orator, the man whose early career had been a blaze of success, and yet all his acquirements and all his knowledge paled beside the active energy of a mere peasant. The reflection pained him; it chafed him sorely to admit, even to his own heart, that birth and blood were not always the superiors, and he casuistically suspected that much of the praise he had heard bestowed upon this girl was little other than the reflex of that selfish esteem the people felt for qualities like their own.

And out of these confused and conflicting thoughts he set to work to paint her to his mind and imagine what she must be. He pictured her a coarse, masculine, determined woman; active, courageous, and full of expedients, with some ability, but far more of self-confidence, the great quality of those who have been their own teachers. From what Mr. Cane had told him, she was one who could take a proud view of life and its duties. That very resolve to cede the property, when she heard that there was yet a Luttrell alive to inherit it, showed there was stuff of no mean order in her nature. "And yet," he thought, "all this could consist with vulgar looks and vulgar manners, and a coarseness of feeling that would be repugnant." With these imaginings he went to bed, and dreamed the whole night of this girl.

"Have you taken my message up to the Abbey?" asked he, as he sat at breakfast.

"Yes, sir; and Miss Luttrell says you are to go where you like. She's off to the far part of the island this morning to see a woman in fever, and won't be back till night."

"Then perhaps I may be able to see those two rooms you spoke of?"

The man shook his head in silence, perhaps not over-pleased at the obstinacy of the stranger to investigate what was deemed sacred.

"I want no guide," said Harry. "I see the Abbey, and I'll find my own way to it."

And with these words he sauntered along, every step and every stone of the path familiar to him. As he drew nigh he saw some changes. The railing of the little garden had been repaired, and the garden itself was better tilled than of yore, and close by the wall of the Abbey, where shelter favoured, a few flowers were growing, and some attempt there seemed making to train a creeper to reach the window-sill.

Molly Ryan was out, and a strange face that Harry knew not received him at the door, leaving him, as he entered, to go where he pleased, simply saying, "There's the way to the Abbey, and there's where *she* lives."

He turned first to the aisle of the church, paved with the tombstones of bygone Luttrells, and where now a cross in blue limestone marked his father's grave. The inscription was, "To the Memory of the Last of the Luttrells, by one who loved him, but not merited his love."

"Strange that she should have said so," thought he, as he sat down upon the stone. But it was soon of the long past his mind was filled with. Of the days of his boyhood; no happy, careless, sunny youth was it, but a time of loneliness and sorrow—of long solitary rambles through the island, and a return at nightfall to a home of melancholy and gloom. He bethought him of his poor mother's tears as they would fall hot upon his face, and the few words, stern and harsh, his father would meet him with; and yet, now in his utter desolation, what would he not give to hear that voice again whose accents were wont to terrify him?—what would he not give to see the face whose slightest sign of reproof had once overwhelmed him with shame?

How fervently, how faithfully, will the heart cling to some memory of kindness for those whose severity had once been almost a terror! What a sifting process do our affections go through where death has come, tearing away the recollections of what once had grieved and pained us, and leaving only the memory of the blessed word that healed, of the loving look that rallied us. John Luttrell had been a hard, stern, unforgiving man: it was but seldom that he suffered his heart to sway him, but there had been moments when his love overcame him, and it was of these Harry now bethought him, and it was in such guise he pictured his father now before him.

"Oh! if he were here to welcome me back—to let me feel I was not homeless in the world—what a moment of joy and happiness had this been!" How keen can sorrow make memory! There was not a little passing word of praise his father ever spoke—there was not a kindly look, nor a little gesture of fondness, that did not recur to him as he sat there and wept.

With slow steps and heavy heart he turned into the house, and sought the little room where his father usually sat during the day. There was the great old chair of bog oak, and there the massive table, and over the fire-place the great two-handed sword, and the stone-headed javelin crosswise over the ox-hide shield; all these he knew, but other objects there were new and strange to him—so strange, that he could not but wonder at them. A half-finished water-colour on an easel, done by no common hand, was at one side of the window, and in a deep chair, as though left hurriedly there, was a guitar. Music, and pen sketches, and books, were strewn about, and a solitary rose in a glass of water bore an almost painful testimony to the rareness of flowers on the spot. A basket of some sewing work—capes of frieze for her school children—stood beside the fire. It was plain to see that this peasant girl had caught up tastes and pursuits which belong to another sphere, and Harry pondered over it, and questioned himself if she were the happier for this cultivation. Was it better for her, or worse, to be endowed with what, in imparting a resource, removes a sympathy?

Seated on the little window-stool—the same spot where he had often sat silent for hours—he fell into a train of melancholy thought. His poor father—the broken-down, crushed man, without a companion or a friend—rose before his mind, and filled each spot he turned to, and it was with a feeling of deep self-reproach he recalled how he himself had left him—deserted him, he called it now—to live on in sorrow and die forlorn. Out of this dreamy half-stupor he was roused by the woman hurriedly telling him that her mistress was coming up the path to the house, and entreating him to go away before she entered. He arose at once, and, passing through the kitchen, issued forth by the back of the Abbey at the very instant that Kate crossed the door.

"Who has been here, Jane? Whose cane is this?" said she, taking up a stick Harry had forgotten in his haste.

The woman explained it was the young gentleman to whom

Molly sees the Ghost of 'The Master'

her mistress gave permission that morning to see the Abbey, and who had only just taken his departure.

"The whole day here!" exclaimed Kate.

"True enough, miss. He was two hours and more in the Abbey, and I thought he was asleep, for he was lying on the master's grave with his face hid; but when I spoke he answered me. It was what he wished, miss, was to be let go up into the tower and have a view from the top; but I told him your own rooms was there, and nobody ever got leave to see them."

"I mean to go to the Murra Glen to-morrow, Molly," said Kate, turning to her old and faithful servant, "and you may let this stranger go over the Abbey in every part; so that he be away before nightfall, the whole is at his disposal. Go down this evening to the inn, and take his stick to him, with this message."

Seated at her tea, Kate was thinking over the long sea voyage that lay before her, and the new land in which she was to seek her fortune, when a wild shrill scream startled her, and, at the same instant, Molly rushed into the room, and when she had reached the middle of it, staggered back, and leaned, half-fainting, against the wall.

"What's the matter, Molly? What has happened?" cried Kate, eagerly.

"May the blessed saints protect and guard us, miss, but I seen him as plain as I see you."

"Whom did you see?"

"Himself that's gone—the master! Glory to him, and peace too, if it was God's will," said the woman, falteringly.

"How foolish this is, Molly. I scarcely expected this from *you*."

"I don't care. I'll swear it on the book I saw him, and heard him too. 'Would you be so kind——' says he; and at that I let a screech out of me and ran in here."

"This is too absurd," said Kate, with some irritation in her voice. "Go and see what this man wants."

"Not if you were to give me a hatful of goold, Miss Kate. May I never, if I'd go there again to be Queen of England."

"I am not pleased with you, Molly," said Kate, taking a candle in her hand and moving towards the door. The woman threw herself at her feet to prevent her, but with a haughty gesture she motioned her away, and passed out.

A man was standing in the doorway, who courteously removed his hat as she came forward, and said, "I am sorry to have alarmed your servant, Miss Luttrell, but I had left my walking-stick here this morning and came to get it."

Screening the light from her with one hand, she threw the full glare on the other's face, and, in a voice of deep emotion, said, "I see well why she was frightened. Your name is Luttrell!"

"I must not deny it to the only one that remains of all my kin. Are you not my cousin Kate?"

She held out her hand to him, and, in a voice quavering and broken, said, "How glad I am to see you—and to see you here under your own roof."

"There must be two words more before that be settled, Kate," said he, kindly, as, still holding her hand in his own, he walked back with her to her room.

"There, Molly—there's your young master; perhaps you will be less frightened now that you see him at my side."

While the poor woman gave way to a transport of joy and tears, Harry continued to gaze at Kate with an intense eagerness. "Tell me one thing, cousin Kate," said he, in a whisper; "answer me truly: were you on board of a convict-ship in Kingstown harbour on Tuesday last, as she was getting under weigh?"

She nodded assent.

"Then it was I who lifted you into the boat, and asked your leave to see you safely on shore."

"I'm ashamed to seem ungrateful, but I have no memory of your kindness. I had too much sorrow on my heart that morning."

"Oh, if you knew how I longed to meet you again—how I walked and walked incessantly to try and come up with you, never dreaming of such happiness as this—that when we met I could claim you as my own dear cousin!"

"And was it right, cousin Harry, for you to come here in disguise and visit the Abbey like a stranger? Was that an evidence of the affection you speak of?"

"You forget, Kate, I didn't know whom I was to meet. If I had known that you were the girl whom I carried down the ladder to the boat I'd have gone to the world's end to see you again. How came you to be there?"

"You shall hear it all when you have time and patience. We each have much to tell, and you shall begin, but not to-night, Harry; let us be satisfied to make acquaintance now. Why do you stare at me?"

"Because you are so beautiful—because I never saw any one so beautiful before."

"A very frank compliment, and I suppose too frank to be construed into what is called flattery."

"To think of you living here!—*you*, in such a place as this! Why, it is downright monstrous."

"Cousin Harry," said she, gravely, "if you are to do nothing but make me compliments, our intimacy will have but a sorry chance to make any progress. I have no doubt I'm pretty, but remember that in this place here there are scores of things you'll be struck by, simply because they come upon you unexpectedly. Look at my little tea equipage, for instance; could you have dreamed of anything so tasteful on the island of Arran?"

The playful raillery of this speech could not turn his thoughts from herself. Nor was it alone her beauty that amazed him, but her exquisite grace of manner, the sweet-toned voice, low and gentle, her every movement and gesture, and then her bearing towards himself, so nicely balanced between the reserve of a maidenly bashfulness and the freedom of a near relative.

"We will have our tea together, Harry," said she, "and you shall tell me all your adventures. You could not readily find a listener more eager for all that is strange, or wild, or exciting. Let me hear of the scenes you have gone through, and I'll be able to make some guess of what manner of man my cousin is."

"My rough life is little more than a long catalogue of common-place hardships—hardships that sailors come at last to look at as the ordinary events of existence, but which certainly tend to make us somewhat careless about life, but very ready to enjoy it. Where am I to begin?"

"At the beginning, of course. I want to see you as a boy before I hear of you as a man."

With a manly frankness, and a modesty totally devoid of any affectation, he told the story of his sea life; the strange lands and people he had seen; the wild spots he had visited; the hopes of fortune at one time full and radiant, at another dashed and destroyed by disaster; dreams of wealth and affluence rudely dispelled by mischances; and, last of all—the crowning calamity—the attack made by the Riffs, and his captivity amongst the Moors.

"Was home very often in your thoughts through these reverses?" asked she, gravely.

"Seldom out of my thoughts, Kate. It had not been, as you may know, a very cheerful or a happy home. It was a lonely, gloomy life I led here, but I believe sorrows can attach just as well as joys, and I longed to see the old rock again, and I used to fancy how much more companionable I could be to my poor father now that I had grown up and had learnt something of the world and its ways. All my misfortunes were nothing compared to the sorrowful tidings that met me as I landed at

Genoa, and learned I was alone in the world, without even one to care for me."

"You went at once to Sir Gervais Vyner's. Tell me about *them.*"

"You know them better than I do, Kate," said he, smiling. "Ada told me of all her love for you—it was the theme she never tired of—your beauty, your wit, your gracefulness, your talent at everything—till I grew half angry. She would talk of nothing else."

"And Ada herself—what is she like? She was, as a child, almost perfectly beautiful."

"She is very handsome. Her features are all regular, and her smile is very sweet, and her manner very gentle, and her voice singularly silvery and musical."

"So that you fell in love with her?"

"No," said he, shaking his head—"no, I did not."

"Yes, yes, you did! That list of her perfections was given too readily not to have been conned over."

"I tell you again, I felt no love for her. We were whole days together, and lived as a brother and a sister might, talking of whatever interested us most, but one word of love never passed between us."

"A look, then?"

"Not even that. Just think one moment, Kate. Who is she, and who am I?"

"What would that signify if your hearts caught fire? Do you think the affections ask leave of title-deeds?"

"Mine certainly did not. They had no need to do so. I was as frank with Ada as with you." Scarcely was the last word out than a deep crimson flush covered his cheek, and he felt overwhelmed with confusion, for he had said what, if true in one sense, might possibly convey a very different meaning in another. "I mean," added he, stammeringly, "I told her all I have told you about my sea-life."

"You are a puzzle to me, Harry," said she, after a pause. "You can enumerate a number of qualities with enthusiasm, and still declare that they had no influence over you. Is this the sailor temperament?"

"I suspect not," said he, smiling. "I rather opine we salt-water folk are too free of our hearts."

"But why were you not in love with her?" cried she, as she arose impatiently, and walked up and down the room. "You come off a life of hardships and perils into what, of all things, is the most entrancing—the daily life of people bred up to all the courtesies and charms that embellish existence—and you find there a very beautiful girl, well disposed to accept your intimacy and your friendship—how can you stop at friendship? I want to hear that."

"I never knew there was any difficulty in the task till now that you have told me of it," said he, smiling.

She opened a little drawer in a cabinet as she stood with her back towards him, and drew on her finger a ring—a certain plain gold ring—which recalled a time of bygone sorrow and suffering, and then, coming close to him, laid her hand upon his arm, so that he could but notice the ring, and said:—

"I ought to have remembered you were a Luttrell, Harry—the proud race who never minded what might bechance their heads, though they took precious care of their hearts!"

"What does that mean?" said he, pointing to the ring; and a paleness like death spread over his face.

"What does such an emblem always mean?" said she, calmly.

"It is not that you are married, Kate?"

"Surely you have heard the story. Mr. M'Kinlay could not have been a week at the Vyners' without telling it."

"I have heard nothing, I know nothing. Tell me at once, are you a wife?—have you a husband living?"

"You must be patient, Harry, if you want a somewhat long history."

"I want no more than what I asked you. Are you a married woman? Answer me that."

"Be calm, and be quiet and listen to me," said she, sitting down at his side. "You can answer your own question when I shall have finished."

"Why not tell me in one word? A Yes or a No cannot cost *you* so much, though one of them may cost *me* heavily."

"What if I could not so answer you? What if no such answer was possible? Will you hear me now?"

"Say on," muttered he, burying his face between his hands—"say on!"

"I have a long story to tell you, Harry, and I will tell it all; first, because you shall give me your counsel; and secondly, because, if you should hear others speak of me, you will know where is the truth. You will believe me? Is it not so?"

"That I will. Go on."

"It would be well if I could speak of myself as one simply unlucky," said she, in a tone of deep melancholy, "but this may not be! I have gone through heavy trials, but there was not one of them, perhaps, not self incurred."

"Oh, Kate, if you would not break my heart with anxiety, tell me at once this ring means nothing—tell me you are free."

"Be patient, Harry, and hear me. Trust me, I have no wish to linger over a narrative which has so little to be proud of. It is a story of defeat—defeat and humiliation from beginning to end."

She began, and it was already daybreak ere she came to the end. Tracking the events of her life from her first days at the Vyners', she related an inner history of her own longings, and ambitions, and fears, and sufferings, as a child ripening into the character of womanhood, and making her, in spite of herself, a plotter and a contriver. The whole fabric of her station was so frail, so unreal, it seemed to demand incessant effort to support and sustain it. At Dalradern, where she ruled as mistress, an accident, a word might depose her. She abhorred the *equivoque* of her life, but could not overcome it. She owned frankly that she had brought herself to believe that the prize of wealth was worth every sacrifice; that heart, and affection, and feeling were all cheap in comparison with boundless affluence.

"You may imagine what I felt," said she, "when after all I had done, to lower myself in my own esteem—crushed within me every sentiment of womanly affection—when, after all this, I came to learn that my sacrifice had been for nothing—that there was a sentiment this old man cared for more than he cared for me—that there was a judgment he regarded more anxiously than all I could say—the opinion of the world; and it actually needed the crushing sorrow of desertion to convince him that it was better to brave the world than to leave it for ever. Till it became a question of his life he would not yield. The same lesson that brought *him* so low served to elevate *me*. I was then here—here in Arran—holding no feigned position. I was surrounded with no luxuries, but there were no delusions. Your father gave me his own proud name, and the people gave me the respect that was due to it. I was real at last. Oh, Harry, I cannot tell you all that means! I have no words to convey to you the sense of calm happiness I felt at being what none could gainsay—none question. It was like health after the flush and madness of fever. This wild spot seemed to my eyes a Paradise! Day by day duties grew on me, and I learned to meet them. All the splendid past, the great life of wealth and its appliances, was beginning to fade away from my mind, or only to be remembered as a bright and gorgeous dream, when I was suddenly turned from my little daily routine by an unhappy disaster. It came in this wise." She then went on to tell of her grandfather's imprisonment and trial, and the steps by which she was led to ask Sir Within's assistance in his behalf. On one side she had to befriend this poor old man, deserted and forlorn, and, on the other, she had to bethink her of her uncle, whose horror at the thought of a public exposure in a court was more than he had strength to endure. If she dwelt but passingly on the description, her shaken voice and trembling lip told too well what the sacrifice had cost her. "The messenger to whom I entrusted my letter, and whom I believed interested almost equally with myself in its success, brought me back for answer that my letter would not be even opened, that Sir Within refused to renew any relations with me whatever—in a word, that we had separated for ever and in everything. I cannot tell now what project was in my head, or how I proposed to myself to befriend my grandfather; some thought, I know, passed through my head about making a statement of his case, so far as I could pick it up from himself, and going personally with this to one of the leading lawyers on the circuit, and imploring his aid. I always had immense confidence in myself, or in whatever I could do by a personal effort. If I have learned to think more meanly of my own powers, the lesson has been rudely taught me. What between the mental strain from this attempt, anxiety, privation, and exposure to bad weather, I fell ill, and my malady turned to brain fever. It was during this time that this man O'Rorke, of whom I have told you, returned, bringing with him Mr. Ladarelle, a young relative of Sir Within's. On the pretext of giving me the rites of my church, a priest was admitted to see me, and some mockery of a marriage ceremony was gone through by this clergyman, who, I am told, united me, unconscious, and to all seeming dying, to this same young gentleman. These details I learned later, for long, long before I had recovered sufficient strength or sense to understand what was said to me, my bridegroom had gone off and left the country."

"And with what object was this marriage ceremony performed?" asked Luttrell.

"I have discovered at last. I have found it out through certain letters which came into my hands in looking over your father's papers. You shall see them yourself to-morrow. Enough now that I say that Sir Within had never rejected my prayer for help; on the contrary, he had most nobly and liberally responded to it. He wrote besides to your father a formal proposal to make me his wife. To prevent the possibility of such an event, Ladarelle planned the whole scheme I have detailed, and when your father wrote to Sir Within that I had left Arran—'deserted him,' he called it—and Ladarelle forwarded a pretended certificate of our marriage, no further proof seemed wanting that I was one utterly unworthy of all interest or regard. I came here in time—not to receive my dear uncle's forgiveness, for he had long ceased to accuse me—his last thoughts of me were kind and loving ones. Since then," said she, "my life has had but one severe trial—my leave-taking with my poor old grandfather; but for this it has been like a strange dream, so much of active employment and duty blending with memories of a kind utterly unlike everything about me, that I am ever asking myself, 'Is it the present or the past is the unreal?'"

"The marriage is, however, a mockery, Kate," said Luttrell; and, taking her hand, he drew off the ring and threw it into the fire.

"You are sure it gives him no claim—no power over me" asked she.

"Claim!—power! None. I'm no lawyer, but I could almost swear that his act would subject him to severe punishment; at all events, you have a cousin, Kate, who will not see you insulted. I'll find out this fellow, if I search ten years for him."

"No, no, Harry. To publish this story would be to draw shame upon me. It was your own father said, 'A woman is worse with an imputed blame than is a man after a convicted fault.' Let me not be town-talk, and I will bear my sorrows patiently."

"That's not the Luttrell way to look at it!" said he, fiercely.

"Remember, Harry, I am only Luttrell by adoption," said she, rising and approaching the fire.

"What are you looking for there in the embers, Kate?"

"My ring," said she, drawing the charred and blackened ring out from the ashes. "I mean to keep this—an emblem of a sorrow and a shame which should not be forgotten."

"What do you mean? It was by no fault of yours this trick was worked!"

"No; but it was my own heartless ambition that provoked it, Harry. I wanted to be a great lady, at the cost of all that gives life a charm."

"You surely would not have married this old man—this Sir Within, you speak of?"

"I would," said she coldly.

"Oh Kate! unsay that. Tell me that you only said this in levity or jest!"

"I will not tell you one word of myself which is not true," said she, in a tone firm and collected.

"And you would have married a man you could not love—a decrepit old man, whose very attentions must have been odious to you?"

"I never forgot the misery I was reared in. I shrank with terror at the thought of going back to it. I used to dream of cold, and want, and privation. I used to ramble in my sleep about the weary load I had to carry up the slippery rocks with bleeding feet, and then wake to see myself waited on like a queen, my slightest word obeyed, my merest whim fulfilled. Are these small things—or, if they be, what are the great ones?"

"The great ones are a fearless heart and a loving nature!" said Harry, fiercely; and his dark face almost grew purple as he darted an angry look at her.

"So they are," said she, calmly. "I had them once too; but I had to lay them down—lay them down as stakes on the table for the prize I played for."

"Oh, this is too bad—too sordid!" cried he, madly.

"Say on, you cannot speak more cruelly than I have spoken to my own heart. All these have I told myself over and over!"

"Forgive me, my dear cousin Kate, but if you knew with what agony your words wring me——"

"I can believe it, Harry; better and purer natures than mine could not stand the test of such confessions, but you would have them, remember *that*. You said, 'No concealments,' and now you are shocked at the naked truth. With very litte aid from self-deception I could have given you a more flattering view of my heart and its affections. I could have told you, as I often told myself, that I wished to be better—that I longed to be better—that the only ones I ever envied were those whose fate entailed no such struggle as mine—a struggle, remember, not to gain smooth water and a calmer sea, but to save life—to escape drowning! To fall from the high place I held was to fall to the lowest depth of all! I had plenty of such casuistry as this ready, had you asked for it. You preferred to have me truthful, you ought not to shrink from the price!"

"Had you no friend to counsel—to guide you?"

"None."

"Was there none to take you away from the danger you lived in?"

"I could have gone back to the cabin I came from; do you think I was well suited to meet its hardships?"

"But my father—surely my father's house was open to you?"

"Not till he believed that he was childless. It was when the tidings of your shipwreck came that he asked me to come here. All his generosity to me, his very affections, were given on a false assumption. He gave me his love, as he gave me his fortune, because he did not know that the rightful heir to both was living."

"No, no. I have heard, in the few hours that I have been here, of your tender care of him, and how he loved you"

"He had none other," said she, sorrowfully.

"Oh, Kate, how differently others speak of you than you yourself. What have I not heard of your devotion to these poor islanders; your kindness to them in sickness, and your cheering encouragement to them in their health. The very children told me of your goodness as I came along."

"*You* gave me the true epithet a while ago, Harry."

"I? What did I say?"

"You used a hard word, but a true one. You called me sordid," said she, in a low, tremulous voice.

"Oh no, no! Never! I never said so. Oh, dear Kate, do not believe I could couple such a word with *you*."

"I will not any more, since you have forgotten it; but in honest truth it was the very epithet my conduct merited. Let us speak of it no more, since it pains you. And now, Harry, there is daybreak. I must not ask you to stay here—here in your own house. I, the mere intruder, must play churlish host, and send you off to your inn."

"This house is yours, Kate. I will never consent to regard it otherwise. You would not have me dishonour my father's name, and take back what he had given?"

"It is too late in the night to open a knotty discussion. Say good-bye, and come back here to breakfast," said she, gaily; "and remember to make your appearance in becoming guise, for I mean to present the lieges to their master."

"I wish you would not send me away so soon; I have many things to ask you."

"And is there not all to-morrow before you? I am going to see Inchegora after breakfast; a very important mission, touching a lime-kiln in dispute there. You shall sit on the bench with me, and aid justice by your counsels."

"Can you not give all to-morrow to me, and leave these cares for another time?"

"No, sir. 'We belong to our people,' as Elizabeth said. Good-night—good-night."

With a most reluctant heart he answered, "Good-night," and pressing her hand with a cordial grasp, he kissed it twice, and turned away.

Sleep was out of the question—his mind was too full of all he had heard to admit of slumber—and so he strolled down to the shore, losing himself amongst the wild fantastic rocks, or catching glimpses of the old abbey at times between their spiked and craggy outlines.

"What a creature, in what a place!" muttered he. "Such beauty, such grace, such fascination, in the midst of all this rugged barbarism!" And what a terrible story was that she told him! the long struggle she had endured, the defeat, and then the victory—the victory over herself at last, for at last she saw and owned how ignoble was the prize for which she had perilled her very existence. "What a noble nature it must be, too," thought he, "that could deal so candidly with its own short-comings, for, as she said truly, 'I could have made out a case for myself, if I would.' But she would not stoop to *that*—her proud heart could not brook the falsehood—and oh, how I love her for it! How beautiful she looked, too, throughout it all; I cannot say whether more beautiful in her moments of self-accusing sorrow, or in the haughty assertion of her own dignity."

One thing puzzled him, she had not dropped one word as to the future. The half-jesting allusion to himself as the Lord of Arran dimly shadowed forth that resolve of which Cane had told him.

"This must not be, whatever shall happen," said he. "*She* shall not go seek her fortune over the seas while I remain here to enjoy her heritage. To-morrow—to-day, I mean," muttered he, "I will lead her to talk of what is to come, and then——" As to the "then," he could not form any notion to himself. It meant everything. It meant his whole happiness, his very life, for so was it, she had won his heart just as completely as though by the work of years.

Where love steals into the nature day by day, infiltrating its sentiments, as it were, through every crevice of the being, it will enlist every selfish trait into the service, so that he who loves is half enamoured of himself; but where the passion comes with the overwhelming force of a sudden conviction, where the whole heart is captivated at once, self is forgotten, and the image of the loved one is all that presents itself. This was Harry Luttrell's case, and if life be capable of ecstacy, it is when lost in such a dream.

◆

CHAPTER LXV.

THE LUTTRELL BLOOD

"LOOK at this, Harry," said Kate, as he came into the room where she was preparing breakfast. "Read that note: it bears upon what I was telling you about last night."

"What a scoundrel!" cried Harry, as his eye ran over the lines. "He scarcely seems to know whether the better game will be menace or entreaty."

"He inclines to menace, however, for he says, 'The shame of an exposure, which certainly you would not be willing to incur.'"

"What may that mean?"

"To connect my name, perhaps, with that of my poor old grandfather; to talk of me as the felon's granddaughter. I am not going to disown the relationship."

"And this fellow says he will arrive to-night to take your answer. He has courage, certainly!"

"Come, come, Harry, don't look so fiercely. Remember, first of all, he is, or he was, a priest."

"No reason that I shouldn't throw him over the Clunck rock!" said Luttrell, doggedly.

"I think we might feel somewhat more benevolently towards him," said she, with a malicious twinkle of the eye, "seeing how generously he offers to go all the way to Italy to see Sir Within, and explain to him that my marriage with Mr. Ladarelle was a mockery, and that I am still open to a more advantageous offer."

"How can you talk of this so lightly?"

"If I could not it would break my heart!" said she, and her lip trembled with agitation. She leaned her head upon her hand for some minutes in deep thought, and then, as though having made up her mind how to act, said, "I wish much, cousin Harry, that you would see this man for me, only——"

"Only what?"

"Well, I must say it, I'm afraid of your temper."

"The Luttrell temper?" said he, with a cold smile.

"Just so. It reaches the boiling-point so very quickly, that one is not rightly prepared for the warmth till he is scalded."

"Come, I will be lukewarm to-day—cold as the spring well yonder, if you like. Give me my instructions. What am I to do?"

"I shall be away all day. I have a long walk before me, and a good deal to do, and I want you to receive this man. He will soon moderate his tone when he finds that I am not friendless; he will be less exacting in his demands when he sees that he is dealing with a Luttrell. Ascertain what is his menace, and what the price of it."

"You are not going to buy him off, surely?" cried Harry, angrily.

"I would not willingly bring any shame on the proud name I have borne even on sufferance. I know well how your father felt about these things, and I will try to be loyal to his memory, though I am never again to hear him praise me for it. Mr. Cane already wrote to me about this man, and advised that some means might be taken to avoid publicity. Indeed, he offered his own mediation to effect its settlement, but I was angry at the thought of such submission, and wrote back, I fear, a hasty, perhaps ill-tempered, answer. Since then Cane has not written, but a letter might come any moment—perhaps to-day. The post will be here by one o'clock; wait for its arrival, and do not see the priest till the letters have come. Open them till you find Cane's, and when you are in possession of what he counsels you will be the better able to deal with this fellow."

"And is all your correspondence at my mercy?"

"All!"

"Are you quite sure that you are prudent in such frankness?"

"I don't know that it will tempt you to any very close scrutiny. I expect an invoice about some rapeseed, I look for a small package of spelling-books, I hope to receive some glasses of vaccine matter to innoculate with, and tidings, perhaps, of a roll of flannel that a benevolent visitor promised me for my poor."

"And no secrets."

"Only one; a sketch of Life on Arran, which I sent to a London periodical, but which is to be returned to me, as too dull, or too melancholy, or too something or other for publication. I warn you about this, as the editor has already pronounced sentence upon it."

"May I read it, Kate?"

"Of course. I shall be very proud to have even one to represent the public I aspired to. Read it by all means, and tell me when I come back that it was admirable, and that the man that rejected it was a fool. If you can pick up any especial bit for praise or quotation, commit it to memory, and you can't think how happy you'll make me, for I delight in laudation, and I do—get—so very—little of it," said she, pausing after each word, with a look of comic distress that was indescribably droll; and yet there was a quivering of the voice and a painful anxiety in her eye that seemed to say the drollery was but a cover to a very different sentiment. It was in this more serious light that Harry regarded her, and his look was one of deepest interest. "You have your instructions now!" said she, turning away to hide the flush his steady gaze had brought to her cheek; "and so good-bye!"

"I'd much rather go with you, Kate," said he, as she moved away.

"No, no," said she, smiling, "you will be better here. There is plenty of work for each of us. Good-bye!"

Harry's wish to have accompanied her thus thwarted, by no means rendered him better disposed towards him who was the cause of the disappointment, and as he paced the room alone he conned over various modes of "clearing off scores" with this fallen priest. "I hope the fellow will be insolent! How I wish he may be exacting and defiant!" As he muttered this below his breath, he tried to assume a manner of great humility—something so intensely submissive as might draw the other on to greater pretension. "I think I'll persuade him that we are at his mercy—absolutely at his mercy!" muttered he. But had he only glanced at his face in the glass as he said it, he would have seen that his features were scarcely in accordance with the mood of one asking for quarter. The boat which should bring the letters was late, and his impatience chafed and angered him. Three several times had he rehearsed to himself the mock humility with which he meant to lure on the priest to his destruction; he had planned all, even to the veriest detail of the interview, where he would sit, where he should place his visitor, the few bland words he would utter to receive him; but when he came to think of the turning-point of the discussion, of that moment when, all reserve abandoned, he should address the man in the voice of one whose indignation had been so long pent up that he could barely control himself to delay his vengeance,—when he came to this, he could plan no more. Passion swept all his intentions to the winds, and his mind became a chaos.

At last the post arrived, but brought only one letter. It was in Cane's writing. He opened it eagerly, and read,—

"DEAR MADAM,—I am happy to inform you that you are not likely to be further molested by applications from the priest O'Rafferty. He no sooner heard that young Mr. Luttrell was alive, and in Ireland, than he at once changed his tone of menace for one of abject solicitation. He came here yesterday to entreat me to use my influence with you to forgive him his part in an odious conspiracy, and to bestow on him a trifle—a mere trifle—to enable him to leave the country, never to return to it.

"I took the great—I hope not unpardonable—liberty to act for you in this matter, and gave him five pounds, for which I took a formal receipt, including a pledge of his immediate departure. Might I plead, in justification of the authority I thus assumed, my fears that if young Mr. Luttrell should by any mischance have met this man, the very gravest disasters might have ensued. His family traits of rashness and violence being, I am informed, only more strikingly developed by his life and experiences as a sailor."

Harry read over this passage three several times, pausing and pondering over each word of it.

"Indeed!" muttered he. "Is this the character I have brought back with me? Is it thus my acquaintances are pleased to regard me? The ungovernable tempers of our race have brought a heavy punishment on us, when our conduct in every possible contingency exposes us to such comment as this! I wonder is this the estimate Kate forms of us? Is it thus she judges the relatives who have shared their name with her?"

To his first sense of disappointment that the priest should escape him, succeeded a calmer, better feeling—that of gratitude that Kate should be no more harassed by these cares. Poor girl! had she not troubles enough to confront in life without the terror of a painful publicity? He read on,—

"Of Mr. Ladarelle himself you are not likely to hear more. He has been tried and convicted of swindling, in France, and sentenced to five years' reclusion, with labour. His father, I learn, is taking steps to disinherit him, and there is no wrong he has done you without its full meed of punishment.

"It was quite possible that he and his accomplice, O'Rorke, might have escaped had they not quarrelled, and each was the chief instrument in the conviction of the other. The scene of violent invective and abuse that occurred between them exceeded, it is said, even the widest latitude of a French criminal court.

"I thought to have concluded my letter here, but I believe I ough to inform you, and in the strictest confidence, that we had a visit from young Mr. Luttrell on Wednesday last. We were much struck by the resemblance he bore to his late father in voice and manners, as well in face as in figure. When I hinted to him—I only hinted passingly—certain scruples of yours about retaining the Arran property, he declared, and in such a way as showed a decided resolve, that, come what might, the estate should not revert to him. 'It was yours,' he said, 'and it was for you to dispose of it.' When he put the question on the ground of a dishonour to his father's memory, I forbore to press it further. The Luttrell element in his nature showed itself strongly, and warned me to avoid any inopportune pressure.

"You will, I suspect, find it exceedingly difficult to carry out your intentions in this matter, and I hope you will allow me to entreat a reconsideration of the whole project; all the more, since every information I have obtained as to the chance of employment in Australia is decidedly unfavourable. Except for the mechanic, it is said, there is now no demand. The governess and tutor market is greatly overstocked, and persons of education are far less in request than strong-bodied labourers.

"I hope sincerely I may be able to dissuade you from what I cannot but call a rash scheme. In the first place, it will not accomplish what you intended regarding the Arran property; and secondly, it will as surely involve yourself in grave difficulty and hardship. I know well how much may be expected from what you call your 'courage,' but 'courage' that will brave great dangers will also occasionally succumb to small daily privations and miseries. There is no doubt whatever how you would behave in the great trial. It is in meeting the slights and injuries that are associated with humble fortune that I really feel you will be unequal.

"Should you, however, persist in your resolve, I shall be able to secure you a passage to Melbourne under favourable circumstances, as a distant relative of my wife's, Captain Crowther, of the *Orion*, will sail from Liverpool on Thursday, the seventh of next month. This gives you still seventeen days; might I hope for such reflection as will induce you to forego a step so full of danger, present and future? Indeed, from Captain Crowther himself I have heard much that ought to dissuade you from the attempt. He went so far as to say yesterday that he believed he had already brought back to England nearly every one of those he had taken out with hopes of literary employment.

"I think I know what you would reply to this. I have only to call upon my memory of our last conversation to remind me of the daring speech you made when I ventured to hint at the difficulty of finding employment; and once more, my dear Miss Luttrell, let me entreat you to remember you have not the habits, the strength, the temperament, that go with menial labour. You have yourself admitted to me that your early sorrows and sufferings are nightmares to you in your sleep—that you are never feverish or ill that they do not recur—that when your head wanders it is about the days of your childish troubles; surely it is not with habits of luxury and refinement you hope to combat these enemies?

"Do not persist in believing that what you call your peasant nature is a garment only laid aside, but which can be resumed at any moment, take my word for it, there is not a trace of it left in you!

"If your desire for independence must be complied with, why not remain and achieve it at home? Mrs. Cane is ready and willing to serve you in any way; and it will be a sincere pleasure to us both if we can acquit towards you any portion of the debt we have long owed your late uncle.

"I wish much you would consult Mr. Luttrell on this subject; indeed, he would have a right to feel he ought to be consulted upon it; and, although his experiences of life may not be large or wide, his near relationship to you gives him a claim to have his opinion cared for.

"You will see from all this insistance, my dear Miss Luttrell, how eager I am to dissuade you from a step which, if taken, will be the great disaster of your whole life. Remember that you are about to act not alone for the present, but for the events and contingencies which are to occur years hence."

The letter wound up with many assurances of esteem, and most cordial offers of every service in the writer's power. A postscript added, "On reconsideration, I see that you must absolutely speak to Mr. Luttrell about your project, since in my notes I find that he positively declines to accept your gift of the Arran estate except in exchange for the larger property in Roscommon. In all my varied experiences, two such clients as yourself and your cousin have never occurred to me."

It was as he was finishing the reading of this letter for the third time that Harry Luttrell felt a hand laid gently on his shoulder. He turned, and saw Kate standing behind him. Her cheek was flushed with the fresh glow of exercise, and her hair, partly disordered, fell in heavy masses beneath her bonnet on her neck and shoulders, while her full lustrous eyes shone with a dazzling brilliancy. It was one of those moments in which every trait that formed her beauty had attained its most perfect development. Harry stared at her with a wondering admiration.

"Well, sir?" cried she, as if asking what his look implied —"well, sir?" But, unable to maintain the cool indifference she had attempted, and feeling that her cheek was growing hot and red, she added, quickly, "What have you done?—have you seen him?—has he been here?" He stared on without a word, his eager eyes seeming to drink in delight without slaking, till she turned away abashed and half vexed. "I don't suppose you heard my question," said she, curtly.

"Of course I heard it, but it was of what I saw I was thinking, not of what I heard."

"Which, after all, was not quite polite, Harry."

"Politeness was not much in my thoughts either," said he. "I couldn't believe any one could be so beautiful."

"What a nice rough compliment, what a dear piece of savage flattery! What would you say, sir, if you had seen me, in my days of finery, decked out in lace and jewels, Harry? And, dear me, don't they make a wondrous difference! I used to come down to dinner at Dalradern at times powdered, or with my hair in short curls, à la Sévigné, and my costume all to suit; and you should have seen the worshipful homage of old Sir Within, as he presented me with my bouquet, and kissed the extreme tips of my fingers. Oh dear, what a delightful dream it was, all of it!"

"What a coquette you must be! What a coquette you are!" muttered he, savagely.

"Of course I am, Harry. Do you think I would deny it? Coquetry is the desire to please, as a means of self-gratification. I accept the imputation."

"It means intense vanity, though," said he roughly.

"And why not vanity, any less than courage or compassion, or a dozen other things one prides himself on having?"

"I think you are saying these things to vex me, Kate. I'll swear you don't feel them."

"No matter what I feel, sir. I am certainly vain enough to believe I can keep *that* for myself. Tell me of this man. Have you seen him?"

"No, he has not come; he *will* not come."

"Not come! And why?"

"Here's a letter from Cane will explain it all; a letter which I suppose you would not have let me read had you seen it first. You said you had no secrets, but it turns out that you had."

"What do you mean?" said she, snatching the letter eagerly from him.

"I read every word of it three times. I know it almost by heart," said he, as he watched her running her eyes over the letter.

"When I said I had no secrets," said she, gravely, "I meant with regard to my past life. Of *that* assuredly I have told you all, freely and candidly. The future is my own, at least so far as what I intend by it."

"And you persist in this scheme?"

"Don't look so sternly—don't speak so harshly, Harry. Let me enjoy the good news of Cane's letter, in so far as this priest is concerned. It is a great weight off my heart to know that my name is not to be bandied about by gossips and newsmongers—that name your poor father treasured with such care, and for whose safeguard he would have made any sacrifice."

"Tell me you will give up this scheme, Kate; tell me you will make Arran your home," cried he, earnestly.

"I mustn't tell you an untruth, Harry. Arran is yours."

"And if it be mine," said he, seizing her hand, "share it with me, Kate. Yes, dearest, be mine also. Oh, do not turn away from me. I know too well how little I resemble those gifted and graceful people your life has been passed with. I am a rough sailor, but remember, Kate, the heart of a gentleman beats under this coarse jacket. I am a Luttrell still."

"And the Luttrells have passed their ordeal, Harry. Three generations of them married peasants to teach their proud hearts humility. Go practise the lesson your fathers have bought so dearly; it will be better than to repeat it. As for me, my mind is made up. Hear me out, Harry. I promised my poor old grandfather to aid him on his trial. Illness overtook me, and I was in a raging fever on the day he was sentenced. It was not for months after that I was able to go to him, and the poor old man, who had believed himself forgotten and deserted, no sooner saw me than he forgave all, and pressed me to his heart with rapturous affection. I told him then—I gave him my solemn pledge—that so soon as I had arranged certain details here, I would follow him across the seas. There are many ways by which a resident can lighten the pains and penalties of a prisoner. I learned these, and know all about them, and I have determined to pay off some part of the debt I owe him, for he loved me—he loved me more than all the world. The very crime for which he is suffering was committed on my behalf; he thought this property should have been mine, and he was ready to stake his life upon it."

"And must he be more to you than *me?*" said Harry, sadly.

"I must pay what I owe, Harry, before I incur a new debt," said she, with a smile of deep melancholy.

"Why did I ever come here? What evil destiny ever brought me to know you?" cried he passionately. "A week ago—one short week—and I had courage to go anywhere, dare anything, and now the whole world is a blank to me."

"Where are you going? Don't go away, Harry. Sit down, like a dear kind cousin and hear me. First of all, bear in mind, people cannot always do what is pleasantest in life——"

A heavy bang at the door stopped her, and he was gone!

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CHAPTER LXVI.

A CHRISTMAS AT ARRAN.

FOR two entire days Harry Luttrell wandered over the island alone and miserable, partly resolved never to see Kate again, yet he had not resolution to leave the spot. She sent frequent messages and notes to him, entreating he would come up to the Abbey, but he gave mere verbal replies, and never went.

"Here's Miss Kate at the door, sir, asking if you are in the house," said the woman of the inn; "what am I to tell her?"

Harry arose, and went out.

"Come and have a walk with me, Harry," said she, holding out her hand cordially towards him. "This is Christmas-day—not a morning to remember one's grudges. Come along; I have many things to say to you."

He drew her arm silently within his own, and walked on. After a few half-jesting reproaches for his avoidance of her, she became more serious in manner, and went on to talk of Arran and its future. She told of what she had done, and what she meant to do, not claiming as her own many of the projects, but honestly saying that the first suggestions of them she had found amongst his father's papers.

"It is of these same papers," said she, more earnestly, "I desire to speak. I want you to read them, and to read them carefully, Harry. You will see that the struggle of a proud man against an unequal marriage marred the whole success of a life; you will see that it was this 'low-lived herd'—the hard words are his own—that had stamped ruin upon him. The disappointment he had met with might have driven him for a while from the world, but, after a year or two, he would have gone back to it more eager for success, more determined to assert himself, than ever. It was the bane of a low connection poisoned all hope of recovery. How could he free himself from the claims of this lawless brood? His journals are filled with this complaint. It is evident, too, from the letters of his friends, how he must have betrayed his misery to them, proud and reserved as he was. There are constant allusions through them to his stern refusal of all invitations, and to his haughty rejection of all their friendly devices to draw him back amongst them.

"It was in some moment of rash vengeance for an injury real or supposed," said she, "that he plunged into this marriage, and completed his ruin. If there was a lesson he desired to teach his son it was this one; if there was a point which he regarded as the very pivot of a man's fortune, it was the belongings which surround and cling to him, for better or for worse, on his journey through life. I will show you not one, but fifty—ay, twice fifty—passages in his diary that mark the deep sense he had of this misfortune. When the terrible tidings reached him that you were lost, he ceased to make entries regularly in his journal, but on your birthday recurring, there is this one: 'Would have been twenty-two to day. Who knows which for the best? No need of my warnings now; no need to say, Do not as I have done!' Are you listening to me, Harry?" asked she, at length, as he never by a word or sign seemed to acknowledge what she was saying.

"Yes, I hear you," said he, in a low voice.

"And you see why, my dear Harry, I tell you of these things. They are more than warnings; they are the last wishes, the dying behests, of a loving father; and he loved you, Harry—he loved you dearly. Now listen to me attentively, and mind well what I say. If these be all warnings to *you*, what are they to *me?* Do you imagine it is only the well-born and the noble who have pride? Do you fancy that we poor creatures of the soil do not resent in our hearts the haughty contempt by which you separate your lot from ours? Do you believe it is in human nature to concede a superiority which is to extend not to mere modes of life and enjoyments, to power, and place, and influence, but to feelings, to sentiments, to affections? In one word, are you to have the whole monopoly of pride, and only leave to us so much as the honour of 'pertaining' to you? Or is it to be enough for us to know that we have dragged down the man who tried to raise us? Reflect a little over this, dear cousin, and you will see that, painful as it is to stoop, it is worse—ten thousand times worse—to be stooped to! Leave me, then, to my own road in life—leave me, and forget me, and if you want to remember me, let it be in some connection with these poor people, whom I have loved so well, and whose love will follow me; and above all, Harry, don't shake my self-confidence as to the future. It is my only capital; if I lose it, I am penniless. Are you listening to me?"

"I hear you but too well," muttered he. "All I gather from your words is, that while accusing us of pride, *you* confess to having ten times more yourself. Perhaps if I had not been a poor sailor, without friends or fortune, that same haughty spirit of yours had been less stubborn."

"What do you mean?" said she, disengaging herself from his arm, and staring at him with wide-opened flashing eyes. "Of what meanness is this you dare to accuse me?"

"You have angered me, and I know not what I say."

"That is not enough, sir. You must unsay it. After all that I have told you of my early life, such an imputation is an insult."

"I unsay it. I ask pardon that I ever said it. Oh, if you but knew the wretchedness of my heart, you would see it is my misery, not myself that speaks."

"Be as brave as I am—or as I mean to be, Harry. Don't refuse to meet the coming struggle—whatever it be—in life; meet it like a man. Take my word for it, had your father lived, he would have backed every syllable I have spoken to you. Come back to the Abbey now, and give me your best counsel. You can tell me about this long voyage that is before me. There are many things I want to ask you."

As they turned towards the house, she went on talking, but in short broken sentences, endeavouring, as it were, to say something, anything that should leave no pause for thought. The old doorway was decked with holly-boughs and arbutus-twigs, in tasteful honour of the day, and she directed his attention to the graceful courtesy of the poor people, who had bethought them of this attention; and simple as the act was, it revealed to Harry the wondrous change which had come over these wild natives, now that their hearts had been touched by sympathy and kindness. In the old days of long ago there were none of these things. Times nor seasons met no recognition. The dark shadow of melancholy brooded drearily over all; none sought to dispel it.

The little children of the school, dressed in their best, were all drawn up in the Abbey, to wish their benefactress a happy Christmas; and Kate had provided a store of little toys from Westport that was certain to render the happiness reciprocal. And there were, too, in the background, the hardy fishermen and their wives, eager to "pay their duty;" and venerable old heads, white with years, were there, to bless her who had made so many hearts light, and so many homes cheery.

"Here is your Master Harry, that you all loved so well," said Kate, as she gained the midst of them. "Here he is, come back to live with you."

And a wild cheer of joy rang through the old walls, while a tumultuous rush was made to grasp his hand, or even touch his coat. What blessings were uttered upon him! What honest praises of his handsome face and manly figure! How like he was to "his Honour," but far stronger and more upstanding than his father, in the days they knew him!

They overwhelmed him with questions about his shipwreck and his perils, and his frank simple manner delighted them. Their own hardy natures could feel for such dangers as he told of, and knew how to prize the courage that had confronted them.

"These are all our guests to-day, Harry," said Kate. "We'll come back and see them by-and-by. Meanwhile, come with me. It is our first Christmas dinner together; who knows what long years and time may do? It may not be our last."

With all those varied powers of pleasing she was mistress of, she made the time pass delightfully. She told little incidents of her Dalradern life, with humorous sketches of the society there; she described the old Castle itself, and the woods around it, with the feeling of a painter; and then she sang for him snatches of Italian or Spanish "romance" to the guitar, till Harry, in the ecstasy of his enjoyment, almost forgot his grief.

From time to time, too, they would pass out and visit the revellers in the Abbey, where, close packed together, the hardy peasantry sat drinking to the happy Christmas that had restored to them the Luttrell of Arran.

The wild cheer with which they greeted Harry as he came amongst them sent a thrill through his heart. "Yes, this was home; these were his own!"

It was almost daybreak ere the festivities concluded, and Kate whispered in Harry's ear: "You'll have a commission from me to-morrow. I shall want you to go to Dublin for me. Will you go?"

"If I can leave you," muttered he, as with bent-down head he moved away.

* * *

CHAPTER LXVII.

A CHRISTMAS ABROAD.

LET us turn one moment to another Christmas. A far more splendid table was that around which the guests were seated. Glittering glass and silver adorned it, and the company was a courtly and distinguished one.

Sir Gervais Vyner sat surrounded with his friends, happy in the escape from late calamity, and brilliant in all the glow of recovered buoyancy and spirits. Nor were the ladies of the house less disposed to enjoyment. The world was again about to dawn upon them in rosy sunshine, and they hailed its coming with true delight.

Not one of all these was, however, happier than Mr. M'Kinlay. The occasion represented to his mind something very little short of Elysium. To be ministered to by a French cook, in the midst of a distinguished company who paid him honour, was Paradise itself. To feel that while his baser wants were luxuriously provided for, all his intellectual sallies—small and humble as they were—were met with a hearty acceptance—was a very intoxicating sensation. Thus, as with half-closed eyes he slowly drew in his Burgundy, his ears drew in, not less ecstatically, such words: "How well said!" "How neatly put!" "Have you heard Mr. M'Kinlay's last?" or, better than all, Sir Gervais himself "repeating him," endorsing, as it were, the little bill he was drawing on Fame.

In happiness only inferior to this, Mr Grenfell sat opposite him. Grenfell was at last where he had striven for years to be. The haughty "woman," who used to look so coldly on him in the park, now smiled graciously when he talked, and vouchsafed towards him a manner positively cordial. Georgina had said: "I almost feel as if we were old friends, Mr. Grenfell, hearing of you so constantly from my brother;" and then little playful recognitions of his humour or his taste would be let fall, as "Of course *you* will say *this*, or think *that?*" all showing how well his nature had been understood, and his very influence felt, years before he was personally known.

These are real flatteries; they are the sort of delicate incense which regale sensitive organizations long called to grosser worship. Your thorough man of the world does not want to be "praised;" he asks to be "understood," because, in his intense self-love, he believes that such means more than praise. It is the delicate appreciation of himself he asks for, that you should know what wealth there is in him, even though he has no mind to display it.

He was an adept in the art of insinuation; besides that, he knew "every one." And these are the really amusing people of society, infinitely more so than those who know "everything." For all purposes of engaging attention there is no theme like humanity. Look at it as long and closely as you will, and you will see that in this great game we call "Life" no two players play alike. The first move or two may be the same, and then, all is different.

There was a third guest; he sat next Lady Vyner, in the place of honour. With a wig, the last triumph of Parisian skill, and a delicate bloom upon his cheek no peach could rival, Sir Within sat glittering in diamond studs and opal buttons, and his grand Cross of the Bath. He was finer than the *epergne!* and the waxlights twinkled and sparkled on him as though he were frosted silver, and filigree. His eyes had their lustre too —uneasy, fitful brightness—as though the brain that ministered to them worked with moments of intermission; but more significantly painful than all was the little meaningless smile that sat upon his mouth, and never changed, whether he spoke or listened.

He had told some pointless rambling story about an archduchess and a court jeweller and a celebrated Jew banker, which none could follow or fathom; and simperingly finished by assuring them that all other versions were incorrect. And there was a pause—a very painful silence that lasted above a minute. Very awful such moments are, when, in the midst of our laughter and our cheer, a terrible warning would seem to whisper to our hearts that all was not joy or gladness there! and that Decay, perhaps Death, was at the board amongst them.

Grenfell, with the hardihood that became him, tried to rally the company, and told the story of the last current scandal, the card-cheating adventure, in which young Ladarelle was mixed up. "They've given him five years at the galleys, I see, Sir Within," said he; "and, I remember, you often predicted some such finish to his career."

"Yes," smiled the old man, tapping his jewelled snuff-box— "yes, you are quite right, Mr. Grenfell—quite right."

"He goes off to Toulon this very day," resumed Grenfell.

"He was a charmant garçon," said the old man, with another smile; "and will be an acquisition to any society he enters."

To the first provocative to laughter this mistake excited, there quickly succeeded a far sadder, darker sentiment, and Lady Vyner arose, and the party retired to the drawing-room.

"I think our dining-room was most uncomfortably warm to-day, Sir Within," said Georgina; "come and see if this little saloon here with the open window is not very refreshing after it." And Sir Within bowed and followed her.

"What do you call *that*, sir?" whispered M'Kinlay, to Grenfell, as they stood taking their coffee at a window. "He has just turned the corner; he has been so long loitering about. The head is gone now, and I suppose, gone for ever."

"My position," whispered M'Kinlay again, "is a very painful one; he sent to me this morning about a codicil he wants executed."

"Does he intend to make me his heir?" asked the other, laughing.

"I opine not, sir. It is of that girl—Miss Luttrell, they pretend to call her now—he was thinking; but really he is not in that state the law requires."

"The disposing mind—eh?"

"Just so, sir. I could not bring myself to face a cross examination on the subject."

"Very proper on your part; proper and prudent both."

"You see, sir, the very servants noticed the way he was in to-day. Harris actually passed him twice without giving him Hock; he saw his state."

"Cruel condition, when the very flunkeys feel for one!"

"I thought at the time what evidence Harris would give—I did, indeed, sir. No solicitor of rank in the profession could lend himself to such a proceeding."

"Don't do it, then," said Grenfell, bluntly.

"Ah! it's very well saying don't do it, Mr. Grenfell, but it's not so easy when you have to explain to your client why you 'won't do it,'"

Grenfell lit a cigarette, and smoked on without reply.

"It was finding myself in this difficulty," continued M'Kinlay, "I thought I'd apply to you."

"To *me!* And why, in Heaven's name, to *me*?"

"Simply, sir, as Sir Within's most intimate friend—the person, of all others, most likely to enjoy his confidence."

"That may be true enough in one sense," said Grenfell, evidently liking the flattery of the position attributed to him; "but though we are, as you observe, on the most intimate terms with each other, I give you my solemn word of honour he never so much as hinted to me that he was going mad."

Mr. M'Kinlay turned angrily away; such levity was, he felt, unbecoming and misplaced, nor was he altogether easy in his mind as to the use a man so unscrupulous and indelicate might make of a privileged communication. While he stood thus irresolute, Grenfell came over to him, and, laying a finger on his arm, said:—

"I'll tell you who'll manage this matter for you better—infinitely better—than either of us. Miss Courtenay."

"Miss Courtenay!" repeated the lawyer, with astonishment.

"Yes, Miss Courtenay. You have only to see, by the refined attention she bestows on him, how thoroughly she understands the break-up that has come upon his mind; her watchful anxiety to screen him from any awkward exposure; how carefully she smooths down the little difficulties he occasionally finds at catching the clue of any theme. She sees what he is coming to, and would evidently like to spare *him* the pain of seeing it while his consciousness yet remains."

"I almost think I have remarked that. I really believe you are right. And what could she do—I mean, what could I ask her to do—in this case?"

"Whatever you were about to ask me! I'm sure I'm not very clear what that was, whether to urge upon Sir Within the inexpediency of giving away a large portion of his fortune to a stranger, or the impropriety of falling into idiocy and the hands of Commissioners in Lunacy."

Again was Mr. M'Kinlay driven to the limit of his temper, but he saw, or thought he saw, that this man's levity was his nature, and must be borne with.

"And you advise my consulting Miss Courtenay upon it?"

"I know of none so capable to give good counsel; and here she comes. She has deposited the old man in that easy chair for a doze, I fancy. Strange enough, the faculties that do nothing, occasionally stand in need of rest and repose!"

Miss Courtenay, after consigning Sir Within to the comforts of a deep arm-chair, turned again into the garden. There was the first quarter of a clear sharp moon in the sky, and the season, though mid-winter, was mild and genial, like spring. Mr. M'Kinlay was not sorry to have received this piece of advice from Grenfell. There was a little suit of his own he wanted to press, and, by a lucky chance, he could now do so, while affecting to be engaged by other interests. Down the steps he hastened at once, and came up with her as she stood at the little balustrade over the sea. Had he been a fine observer, or had he even had the common tact of those who frequent women's society, he would have seen that she was not pleased to have been followed, and that it was her humour to be alone, and with her own thoughts. To his little commonplaces about the lovely night and the perfumed air, she merely muttered an indistinct assent. He tried a higher strain, and enlisted the stars and the moon, but she only answered with a dry "Yes, very bright."

"Very few more of such exquisite nights are to fall to my lot, Miss Georgina," said he, sighing. "A day or two more must see me plodding my weary way north'ard, over the Mont Cenis pass."

"I wonder you don't go by Marseilles, or by the Corniche," said she, carelessly, as though the route itself was the point at issue.

"What matters the road which leads me away from where I have been so—happy?" He was going to say "blest;" but he had not been blessed, and he was too technically honest to misdirect in his brief. No rejoinder of any kind followed on this declaration. He paused, and asked himself, "What next? Is the court with me?" Oh! what stores of law lore, what wealth of crown cases reserved, what arguments in Banco, would he not have given, at that moment, for a little insight into that cunning labyrinth, a woman's heart! Willingly would he have bartered the craft it had taken years to accumulate for that small knowledge of the sex your raw attaché or rawer ensign seems to have as a birthright. "I am too abrupt," thought he. "I must make my approaches more patiently—more insidiously. I'll mask my attack, and begin with Sir Within."

"I have been plotting all day, Miss Courtenay," said he, in a calmer tone, "how to get speech of you. I am in great want of your wise counsel and kindly assistance. May I indulge the hope that they will not be denied me?"

"Let me learn something of the cause, sir, in which they are to be exercised."

"One for which you feel interested; so much I can at least assure you. Indeed," added he, with a more rhetorical flourish of manner, "it is a case that would enlist the kindly sympathies of every generous heart."

"Yes, yes—I understand; a poor family—a distressed tradesman—a sick wife—ailing children. Don't tell me any details! they are always the same—always painful. I will subscribe of course. I only wonder how you chanced upon them. But never mind; count on me Mr. M'Kinlay; pray do."

She was turning impatiently away, when he followed, and said, "You have totally misapprehended me, Miss Courtenay. It was not of a poor person I was thinking at all. It was of a very rich one. I was about to bespeak your interest for Sir Within Wardle."

„For Sir Within Wardle! What do you mean, sir?" said she, in a voice tremulous with feeling, and with a flush on her cheek, which, in the faint light, fortunately, Mr. M'Kinlay failed to remark.

"Yes, Miss Courtenay. It is of him I have come to speak. It is possible I might not have taken this liberty, but in a recent conversation I have held with Mr. Grenfell, he assured me that you, of all others, were the person to whom I ought to address myself."

"Indeed, sir," said she, with a stern cold manner. "May I ask what led your friend to this conclusion?"

"The great friendship felt by this family for Sir Within, the sincere interest taken by all in his welfare," said he, hurriedly, and confusedly, for her tone had alarmed him, without his knowing why or for what.

"Go on, sir; finish what you have begun."

"I was going to mention to you, Miss Courtenay," resumed he, in a most confidential voice, "that Sir Within had sent for me to his room yesterday morning, to confer with him on certain matters touching his property. I was not aware before what a large amount was at his disposal, nor how free he was to burden the landed estate, for it seems that his life-interest was the result of a certain family compact. But I ask your pardon for details that can only weary you."

"On the contray, M'Kinlay, it is a subject you have already made as interesting as a novel. Pray go on."

And he did go on; not the less diffusely that she gave him the closest attention, and showed, by an occasional shrewd or pertinent question, with what interest she listened. We are not to suppose the reader as eager for these details, however, and we skip them altogether, merely arriving at that point of the narrative where Mr. M'Kinlay recounted the various provisions in Sir Within's last will, and the desire expressed by him to append a codicil.

"He wants, my dear Miss Courtenay," said he, warming with his theme—"he wants to make a sort of provision for this girl he called his ward—Miss Luttrell, he styles her; a project, of course, to which I have no right to offer objection, unless proposed in the manner in which I heard it, and maintained on such grounds as Sir Within was pleased to uphold it."

"And what were these, pray?" said she, softly.

"It will tax your gravity if I tell you, Miss Courtenay," said he, holding his handkerchief to his mouth, as though the temptation to laugh could not be repressed. "I assure you it tried me sorely when I heard him."

"I have much control over my feelings, sir. Go on."

"You'll scarce believe me, Miss Courtenay. I'm certain you'll think me romancing."

"I hope I form a very different estimate of your character, sir."

"'Well,' said he, 'I should like you to make a codicil, to include a bequest to Miss Luttrell; because in the event of my marrying'—don't laugh, Miss Courtenay; on my honour he said it—'in the event of my marrying, it would be more satisfactory that this matter were previously disposed of.'"

"Well, sir!" said she; and, short as that speech was, it banished every mirthful emotion out of Mr. M'Kinlay's heart, and sent a cold thrill through him.

"It was not the thought of providing for this young lady made me laugh, Miss Courtenay; far from it. I thought it laudable, very laudable; indeed, if certain stories were to be believed, Sir Within was only just, not generous. What amused me was the pretext, the possible event of his marrying. It was that which overcame me completely."

"And to which, as you say, you offered strenuous objections?"

"No, Miss Courtenay. No. Nothing of the kind. I objected to entertain the question of altering the will, accompanied as the request was by what I could not help regarding as symptoms of a wandering incoherent intellect."

"What do you mean, sir? Do you intend to insinuate that Sir Within Wardle is insane? Is that your meaning?"

"I should certainly say his mind is verging on imbecility. I don't think the opinion will be disputed by any one who sat at table with him to-day."

"I declare, sir, you amaze me!" cried she, in a voice of terror. "You amaze and you frighten me. Are there any others of us in whom you detect incipient madness! Did you remark any wildness in my sister's eyes, or any traits of eccentricity in my mother's manner? To common, vulgar apprehensions—to my brother's and my own—Sir Within was most agreeable to-day. We thought him charming in those little reminiscences of a life where, be it remembered, the weapons are not the coarse armour of every-day society, but the polished courtesies that kings and princes deal in. I repeat, sir, to our notions his anecdotes and illustrations were most interesting."

Mr. M'Kinlay stood aghast. What could have brought down upon him this avalanche of indignation and eloquence? Surely in his remark on that old man's imbecility he could not be supposed to insinuate anything against the sanity of the others! His first sensation was that of terror; his second was anger. He was offended—"sorely hurt," he would have called it—to be told that in a matter of social usage, in what touched on conventionalities, he was not an efficient testimony.

"I am aware, fully aware, Miss Courtenay," said he, gravely, "that Sir Within's society is not my society; that neither our associations, our topics, or our ways of life are alike; but on a question which my professional opinion might determine—and such a question might well arise—I will say that there are few men at the English Bar would be listened to with more deference."

"Fiddle-faddle, sir! We have nothing to do with the Bar or barristers, here. I have a great esteem for you—we all have—and I assure you I can give no better proof of it than by promising that I will entirely forget this conversation—every word of it."

She waved her hand as she said, "By-bye!" and flitted rather than walked away, leaving Mr. M'Kinlay in a state of mingled shame and resentment that perfectly overwhelmed him.

For the honour of his gallantry I will not record the expressions with which he coupled her name; they were severe—they were even unprofessional; but he walked the garden alone till a late hour of the evening, and when Sir Gervais went at last in search of him, he refused to come in to tea, alleging much preoccupation of mind, and hinting that an urgent demand for his presence in London might possibly—he was not yet quite certain—oblige him to take a very hurried leave of his kind hosts.

In fact, Mr. M'Kinlay was in the act of determining with himself the propriety of a formal demand for Miss Courtenay in marriage, and endeavouring to make it appear that he "owed it to himself," but, in reality, was almost indifferent as to the upshot. There are such self delusions in the lives of very shrewd men when they come to deal with women, and in the toils of one of these we leave him.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

TRUSTFULNESS.

Perhaps the night brought reflection; at all events Mr. M'Kinlay had so far recovered himself, that he came down to breakfast with a smile on his face and a mass of fresh-opened letters in his hand, with whose contents he purposed to amuse the company.

Miss Courtenay's manner was so kind, so actually cordial, too, that he felt perfectly reassured on the score of their last interview; and as Sir Within was not present—he never made his appearance till late in the afternoon—all went on pleasantly and well.

Giving the precedence to "fashionable intelligence," Mr. M'Kinlay related how certain great people were about to marry certain other great people, with intimations as to the settlements, and, in some cases, a minute account of the costly presents to the bride—all circumstances which, somehow, seem to have their interest for every age, and class, and condition of humanity. Some of these were known to Vyner, and he asked about them with eagerness. Grenfell knew none of them except by name, but he spoke of them with all the confidence of an old and intimate friend. Of the "men," without using their titles; of the women as dear Lady Fanny, or that charming little Lady Grace. So that hearing him was actually imbibing an atmosphere of aristocracy, inhaling the peerage at every respiration.

"What is the large packet with all the seals on it, Mr. M'Kinlay," asked Georgina. "It has been torturing my curiosity in the most painful manner these last ten minutes."

"This, my dear Miss Courtenay," said he, laying his hand on a somewhat bulky parcel, "is not for me, though it came under cover to my address. It is for Sir Within Wardle, in a lady's hand-writing."

"I think I know the hand," said Miss Courtenay, as she bent her head over it.

"Of course you do, Aunt Georgy. It is Kate's. Nobody ever made those dear little round symbols but herself. It is the very prettiest writing in the world."

"By the way," said Mr. M'Kinlay, searching amongst the papers before him, "there is something here—I just glanced at it—from that young lady. Ay, here it is! You know, Sir Gervais, that you instructed me to write to the land agents of the late Mr. Luttrell, and inform them of your intention to confirm the deed of gift of the lodge in Donegal on Miss Luttrell; in consequence of which I wrote to Messrs. Cane and Carter, and here is their reply. But perhaps I had better keep these business matters for another opportunity?"

"Not at all. We are all friends here, and all about equally interested in these affairs," said Sir Gervais. "Go on."

Mr. M'Kinlay mumbled over, in an indistinct tone, something that sounded like an apology for not having more promptly answered his late communication. "'It was only yesterday,'" he read aloud, "'that we were in receipt of Miss Luttrell's reply. The young lady refuses to accept of the property in question. She declines to admit that it had been at any time in the possession of her family, and desires me, while expressing her deep sense of gratitude, to explain that, associated as the spot is to her with a great calamity, it never could be an object of her desire or ambition.' "

"She refers to that scrimmage where her old grandfather killed a man," said Grenfell, stirring his tea. "Really, I fancied they took these things much easier in Ireland."

"Don't you see that the young lady is of the exalted school? Not to say that, as she always gambled for a high stake, she can't abide low play."

This bitter speech Georgina addressed directly to Grenfell, as the one person in the company adapted to comprehend it. He nodded and smiled a perfect acquiescence with her, and Mr. M'Kinlay read on:—

" 'For your own guidance, therefore, as well as Sir Gervais Vyner's—if you should desire to make the communication to him—I may remark, that any further insistance on this project would be perfectly ineffectual. Everything I have seen of Miss Luttrell has shown her to be a person of most inflexible will, and a determination far beyond the common. This will be apparent to you when you hear that she is equally resolved to make over the Arran estate, bequeathed to her by her late uncle, to the present Mr. Luttrell, leaving herself, as I may say, totally penniless and unprovided for.' "

"What a noble-hearted, generous girl!" cried Vyner.

"The dear, high-hearted Kate!" murmured Ada.

"A most artful, designing minx!" whispered Georgina to Grenfell; "but I suspect that her scheme will not have the success she anticipates."

" 'Of course,' " read on M'Kinlay, " 'I mention the last in perfect confidence to you.' "

"Oh, of course!" broke in Georgina, "my dear Mr. M'Kinlay; the very first trait I discover in myself of angelic self-devotion, I'll certainly impart it to you under the seal of inviolable secrecy. Mind, therefore, that you tell nobody what a mine of goodness, of charity, and self-denial I am."

Mr. M'Kinlay bowed an acquiescence, not aware in the least to what he was acceding, so overcome was he by the astounding assurance that the world contained one creature who refused to accept a legacy or avail herself of a gift.

"I am such a poor, weak-minded, vacillatory being myself," said Georgina, still turning to Grenfell as most likely to appreciate her meaning, "that I really feel terrified in the presence of these great-souled creatures, who refuse to be stirred by the common motives of humanity."

"The girl must be a fool!" muttered M'Kinlay, with his eyes fixed on a postscript of Cane's letter—"a perfect fool!" But, without explaining why he thought so, he bundled up his papers, and hurried away.

"What is the mysterious parcel? I am dying to know the contents of it," said Georgina, as she stood at the window with Grenfell.

"I think I could guess," said he, slowly.

"You think you could guess! And you have the coolness to tell me this, seeing all the tortures of my curiosity!"

"It is by the shape of the packet that I am disposed to believe I know what is in it."

"Pray tell me! Do tell me!" said she, entreatingly.

"I don't think I can. I don't think I ought. I mean," said he, in a more apologetic tone—"I mean, it is not *my* secret. It is another's—that is, if my guess be the right one."

"And you have the courage to heighten my eagerness by all this preamble! Why, my dear Mr. Grenfell, they told me, that of all the men about town, none knew women as you did!"

"Who told you that?" asked he, eagerly.

"Scores of people." And she quoted at random the most distinguished names of her acquaintance, every syllable of their high-sounding titles falling on Grenfell's ear with a cadence perfectly enthralling. "Come, now," said she, with a look of entreaty, "don't worry me any longer. You see I know more than one half of the secret, if it be a secret, already; from whom it comes, and to whom it is addressed."

"I am in your hands," said he, in a tone of submission. "Come out into the garden, and I'll tell you all I know."

Georgina accepted his arm as he spoke, and they passed out into a shady alley that led down to the sea.

"If I be right," said he, "and I'd go the length of a wager that I am, the packet you saw on the breakfast-table contains one of the most costly ornaments a woman ever wore. It was a royal present on the wedding-day of Sir Within Wardle's mother, and sent by him to fulfil the same office to Miss Luttrell on becoming Mrs. Ladarelle."

"You know this!" said she, in a slow, collected tone.

"I know it because he sent me to his gem-room at Dalradern to fetch it. He opened the casket in my presence, he showed me the jewels, he explained to me the peculiar setting. Emeralds on one side, opals on the other, so as to present two distinct suites of ornaments. I remember his words, and how his lips trembled as he said, 'Ladies in those times were wont to turn their necklaces, now they only change their affections!' You'd scarcely believe it, Miss Courtenay, but it is fact, positive fact, the poor old man had been in love with her."

"I certainly cannot stretch my credulity to that extent, Mr. Grenfell," said she, with a shade of vexation in her voice, "though I could readily believe how an artful, unprincipled girl, with a field all her own, could manage to ensnare a most gentle, confiding nature into a degree of interest for her, that she would speedily assume to be a more tender feeling. And was the casket sent to *her*, Mr. Grenfell?" asked she, in a suddenly altered tone.

"Yes, I enclosed it, with an inscription dictated by Sir Within himself."

"And she sends it back to him?" said she, pondering over each word as though it were charged with a deep significance.

"It would seem so."

"I think you guess why. I am certain, if I have not taken a very wrong measure of Mr. Grenfell's acuteness, that he reads this riddle pretty much as I do myself."

"It is by no means improbable," said Grenfell, who quickly saw the line her suspicions had taken. "I think it very likely the same interpretation has occurred to each of us."

"Give me yours," said she, eagerly.

"My reading is this," replied he: "she has returned his present on the ground that, not being Mrs. Ladarelle, she has no claim to it; the restitution serving to show at the same moment a punctilious sense of honour, and, what she is fully as eager to establish, the fact that, being still unmarried, there is nothing to prevent Sir Within himself from a renewal of his former pretensions."

"How well you know her! How thoroughly you appreciate her wily, subtle nature!" cried she, in warm admiration.

"Not that the game will succeed," added he; "the poor old man is now beyond such captivations as once enthralled him."

"How so? What do you mean?" asked she, sharply.

"I mean simply what we all see. He is rapidly sinking into second childhood."

"I declare, Mr. Grenfell, you astonish me!" said she, with an almost impetuous force of manner. "At one moment you display a most remarkable acuteness in reading motives and deciphering intentions, and now you make an observation actually worthy of Mr. M'Kinlay."

"And so you do not agree with me?" asked he.

"Agree with you! certainly not. Sir Within Wardle is an old friend of ours. Certain peculiarities of manner he has. In a great measure they have been impressed upon him by the circumstances of his station. An ambassador, a great man himself, is constantly in the presence of a sovereign, who is still greater. The conflict of dignity with the respect due to royalty makes up a very intricate code of conduct and manner of which the possessor cannot always disembarrass himself, even in the society of his equals. Something of this you may have remarked in Sir Within's manner; nothing beyond it, I am confident!"

"I only hope, my dear Miss Courtenay, that, if the day should come when my own faculties begin to fail me, I may be fortunate enough to secure you for my defender."

"The way to insure my advocacy will certainly not be by attacking an old and dear friend!" said she, with deep resentment in tone; and she turned abruptly and entered the house.

Mr. Grenfell looked after her for a moment in some astonishment. He was evidently unprepared for this sudden outburst of passion, but he quickly recovered himself, and, after a brief pause, resumed his walk, muttering below his breath as he went, "So, then, *this* is the game! What a stupid fool I have been not to have seen it before! All happening under my very eyes too! I must say, she has done it cleverly—very cleverly." And with this cordial appreciation of female skill, he lit his cigar, and seating himself on the sea-wall, smoked and ruminated during the morning. There were many aspects of the question that struck him, and he turned from the present to the future with all that ready-wittedness that had so long favoured him in life.

He heard the bell ring for luncheon, but he never stirred; he was not hungry, neither particularly anxious to meet Miss Courtenay again. He preferred to have some few words with her alone ere they met in society. He thought he had tact enough to intimate that he saw her project, and was quite ready to abet it without anything which could offend her dignity. This done, they would be sworn friends ever after. As he sat thus thinking, he heard a quiet step approaching. It was doubtless a servant sent to tell him that luncheon was served, and while doubting what reply to make, he heard M'Kinlay call out, "I have found you at last! I have been all over the house in search of you."

"What is the matter? What has happened? Why are you so flurried—eh?"

"I am not flurried. I am perfectly calm, perfectly collected—at least, as collected as a man can hope to be who has had to listen for half an hour to such revelations as I have had made me; but it is all over now, and I am thankful it is. All over and finished!"

"What is over? What is finished?"

"Everything, sir—everything! I leave this within an hour—earlier if I can. I have sent two messengers for the horses, and I'd leave on foot—ay, sir, on foot—rather than pass another day under this roof!"

"Will you have the extreme kindness to tell me why you are going off in this fashion?"

Instead of complying with this reasonable request, Mr. M'Kinlay burst out into a passionate torrent, in which the words "Dupe!" "Fool!" and "Cajoled!" were alone very audible, but his indignation subsided after a while sufficiently to enable him to state that he had been sent for by Sir Within, after breakfast, to confer with him on the subject of that codicil he had spoken of on the previous day.

"He was more eager than ever about it, sir," said he. "The girl had written him some very touching lines of adieu, and I found him in tears as I came to his bedside. I must own, too, that he talked more sensibly and more collectedly than before, and said, in a tone of much meaning, 'When a man is so old and so friendless as I am, he ought to be thankful to do all the good he can, and not speculate on any returns either in feeling or affection.' I left him, sir, to make a brief draft of what he had been intimating to me. It would take me, I told him, about a couple of hours, but I hoped I could complete it in that time. Punctual to a minute, I was at his door at one o'clock; but guess my surprise when Miss Courtenay's voice said, 'Come in!' Sir Within was in his dressing-gown, seated at the fire, the table before him covered with gems, and trinkets, with which he appeared to be intently occupied. 'Sit down, M'Kinlay,' said he, courteously. 'I want you to choose something here—something that Mrs. M'Kinlay would honour me by accepting.' She whispered a word or two hastily in his ear, and he corrected himself at once, saying, 'I ask pardon! I meant your respected mother. I remember you are a widower.' To withdraw his mind from this painful wandering, I opened my roll of papers, and mentioned their contents. Again she whispered him something, but he was evidently unable to follow her meaning; for he stared blankly at her, then at me, and said, 'Yes, certainly, I acquiesce in everything.' 'It will be better, perhaps, to defer these little matters, Miss Courtenay,' said I, 'to some moment when Sir Within may feel more equal to the fatigue of business.' She stooped down and said something to him, and suddenly his eyes sparkled, his cheek flushed, and, laying his hand with emphasis on the table, he said, 'I have no need of law or lawyers, sir! This lady, in doing me the honour to accord me her hand, has made her gift to me more precious by a boundless act of confidence; she will accept of no settlements.' 'Great Heavens! Miss Courtenay,' whispered I, 'is he not wandering in his mind? Surely this is raving!' 'I think, sir, you will find that the only person present whose faculties are at fault is Mr. M'Kinlay. Certainly I claim exemption both for Sir Within Wardle and myself.' It was all true, sir—true as I stand here! She is to be his wife. As to her generosity about the settlements, I understood it at once. She had got the whole detail of the property from me only yesterday, and knew that provision was made—a splendid provision, too—for whomsoever he might marry. So much for the trustfulness!"

"But what does it signify to *you*, M'Kinlay? You are not a Lord Chancellor, with a function to look after deranged old men, and fatherless young ladies, and I don't suppose the loss of a settlement to draw will be a heart-break to you."

"No, sir; but lawyer as I am, there are depths of perfidy I'm not prepared for."

"Come in and wish them joy, M'Kinlay. Take my word for it, it might have been worse. Old Sir Within's misfortune might have befallen you or myself!"

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE END.

"You see, sir, she is obstinate," said Mr. Cane to Harry Luttrell, as they sat closeted together in his private office. "She is determined to make over the Arran estate to you, and equally determined to sail for Australia on the 8th of next month."

"I can be obstinate too," said Harry, with a bent brow and a dark frown—"I can be obstinate too, as you will see, perhaps, in a day or two."

"After all, sir, one must really respect her scruples. It is clear enough, if your father had not believed in your death, he never would have made the will in her favour."

"It is not of that I am thinking," said Luttrell, with a tone of half irritation; and then, seeing by the blank look of astonishment in the other's face that some explanation was necessary, he added, "It was about this foolish journey, this voyage, my thoughts were busy. Is there no way to put her off it?"

"I am afraid not. All I have said—all my wife has said—has gone for nothing. Some notion in her head about the gratitude she owes this old man overbears every other consideration, and she goes on repeating, 'I am the only living thing he trusts in. I must not let him die in disbelief of all humanity.'" Harry made a gesture of impatient meaning, but said nothing, and Cane went on: "I don't believe it is possible to say more than my wife has said on the subject, but all in vain; and, indeed, at last, Miss Luttrell closed the discussion by saying, 'I know you'd like that we should part good friends; well, then, let us not discuss this any more. You may shake the courage I shall need to carry me through my project, but you'll not change my determination to attempt it.' These were her last words here."

"They were all the same!" muttered Harry, impatiently, as he walked up and down the room. "All the same!"

"It was what she hinted, sir."

"How do you mean—in what way did she hint it?"

"She said one morning—she was unusually excited that day—something about the wilfulness of peasant natures, that all the gilding good fortune could lay on them never succeeded in hiding the base metal beneath; and at last, as if carried away by passion, and unable to control herself, she exclaimed, 'I'll do it, if it was only to let me feel real for once! I'm sick of shams!—a sham position, a sham name, and a sham fortune!'"

"I offered her the share of mine, and she refused me," said Luttrell, with a bitterness that revealed his feeling.

"You offered to make her your wife, sir!" cried Cane, in astonishment.

"What so surprises you in that?" said Harry, hastily. "Except it be," added he, after a moment, "my presumption in aspiring to one so far superior to me."

"I wish you would speak to Mrs. Cane, Mr. Luttrell. I really am very anxious you would speak to her."

"I guess your meaning—at least, I suspect I do. You intend that your wife should tell me that scandal about the secret marriage, that dark story of her departure from Arran, and her repentant return to it; but I know it all, every word of it, already."

"And from whom?"

"From herself—from her own lips; confirmed if I wanted confirmation, by other testimony."

"I think she did well to tell you," said Cane, in a half uncertain tone.

"Of course she did right. It was for me to vindicate her, if she had been wronged, and I would have done so, too, if the law had not been before me. You know that the scoundrel is sentenced to the galleys?"

Cane did not know it, and heard the story with astonishment, and so much of what indicated curiosity, that Harry repeated all Kate had told him from the beginning to the end.

"Would you do me the great favour to repeat this to my wife? She is sincerely attached to Miss Luttrell, and this narrative will give her unspeakable pleasure."

"Tell her from me, that her affection is not misplaced—she deserves it all!" muttered Harry, as he laid his head moodily against the window, and stood lost in thought.

"Here comes the postman. I am expecting a letter from the captain of the Australian packet-ship, in answer to some inquiries I had made in Miss Luttrell's behalf."

The servant entered with a packet of letters as he spoke, from which Cane quickly selected one.

"This is what I looked for. Let us see what it says:—

"'Dear Sir,—I find that I shall be able to place the poop cabin at Miss L.'s disposal, as my owner's sister will not go out this spring. It is necessary she should come over here at once, if there be any trifling changes she would like made in its interior arrangement. The terms, I believe, are already well understood between us. By the Hamburg packet-ship *Drei Heilige*, we learn that the last outward-bound vessels have met rough weather, and a convict-ship, the *Blast*, was still more unfortunate. Cholera broke out on board, and carried off seventy-three of the prisoners in eleven days.'"

There was a postcript marked confidential, but Cane read it aloud:—

"'Can you tell me if a certain Harry Luttrell, who has signed articles with me as second mate, is any relation of Miss L.'s? He has given me a deposit of twenty pounds, but my men think he is no seaman, nor has ever been at sea. Do you know anything of him and what?'"

"Yes!" said Harry, boldly. "Tell him you know him well; that he was with you when you read aloud that passage in his letter; assure him—as you may with a safe conscience—that he is a good sailor, and add, on my part, that he has no right to make any other inquiries about him."

"And do you really intend to make this voyage?"

"Of course I do! I told you a while ago I could be as obstinate as my cousin. You'll see if I don't keep my word.

Mind me, however; no word of this to Miss Luttrell. I charge you that!"

"And the property, sir! What are your views respecting the estate?"

"I shall write to you. I'll think of it," said Harry, carelessly. After a few words more, they parted. Harry had some things to buy in the city, some small preparations for the long voyage before him; but promising Cane to come back and take a family dinner with him, he went his way. For some hours he walked the streets half unconsciously, a vague impression over him that there was something he had to do, certain people to see, certain places to visit; but so engaged was he with the thought of Kate and her fortunes, his mind had no room for more. "She shall see," muttered he to himself, "that I am not to be shaken off. My Luttrell obstinacy, if she will call it so, is as fixed as her own. Country has no tie for *me*. Where she is, there shall be my country." Some fears he had lest Cane should tell her of his determination to sail in the same ship with her. She was quite capable of outwitting him if she could only get a clue to this. Would Cane dare to disobey him? Would he face the consequences of his betrayal? From these thoughts he wandered on to others as to how Kate would behave when she found he had followed her. Would this proof of attachment move her? Would she resent it as a persecution? Hers was so strange a nature, anything might come of it. "The same pride that made her refuse me may urge her to do more. As she said so haughtily to me at Arran, 'The peasant remedy has failed to cure the Luttrell malady; another cure must be sought for!'"

Harry had scarcely knocked at Cane's door, when it was opened by Cane himself, who hurriedly said, "I have been waiting for you. Come in here;" and led him into his own room. "She's above stairs. She has just come," whispered he.

"Who?" asked Harry, eagerly. "Who?"

"Your cousin—Miss Luttrell. A letter from the surgeon of the convict-ship has conveyed news of old Malone's death, and she has come up to free herself from her arrangement with the captain. And——"

He stopped and hesitated with such evident confusion, that Harry said, "Go on, sir; finish what you were about to say."

"It is her secret, not mine, Mr. Luttrell; and I know it only through my wife."

"I insist on hearing it. I am her nearest of kin, and I have a right to know whatever concerns her."

"I have already told you what I promised to keep secret. I was pledged not to say she was here. I came down to make some excuse for not receiving you to-day at dinner—some pretext of my wife's illness. I beg, I entreat you will not ask me for more."

"I insist upon all you know," was Harry's stern reply.

"How do I even know it," cried Cane, in despair, "from a few incoherent words my wife whispered in my ear as she passed me? Were I to tell, it may be only to mislead you."

"Tell me, whatever may come of it."

Cane took a turn or two up and down the room, and at last, coming in front of Luttrell, said, "She is about to take back her old name, and with it the humble fortune that belonged to it. She says you and yours have suffered enough from the unhappy tie that bound you to her family. She is resolved you shall never see, never hear of her again. She took her last look at Arran last night. To-morrow she declares she will go away from this, where none shall trace her. There's her secret! I charge you not to betray how you came by it."

"Let me see her; let me speak with her."

"How can I? I have promised already that you should not hear she is here."

"Send for your wife, and let me speak to her. I must—I will speak to her."

"Go into that room for a moment, then, and I will advise with my wife what is to be done."

Harry passed into the room and sat down. He heard Cane's bell ring, and soon afterwards could mark the tread of a foot on the stairs, and then the sound of voices talking eagerly in the adjoining room. His impatience nearly maddened him; his heart beat so that he felt as if his chest could not contain it; the vessels of his neck, too, throbbed powerfully. He opened the window for air, and then, as though the space was too confined, flung wide a door at the side of the room. As he did this, he saw that it led to the stairs. Quicker than all thought his impulse urged him. He dashed up and entered the drawing-room, where Kate sat alone, and with her head buried between her hands.

She looked up, startled by his sudden entrance, and then, resuming her former attitude, said, in a low muffled voice, "You have heard what has befallen me. I am not fated to acquit the debt I owe."

Harry sat down beside her in silence, and she went on, "I was hoping that this pain might have been spared us—I mean, this meeting—it is only more sorrow. However, as we are once more together, let me thank you. I know all that you intended, all that you meant by me. I know that you would have come with me, too. I know all! Now, Harry," said she, in a more resolute voice, "listen to me calmly. What I say to to you is no caprice, no passing thought, but the long-earned conviction of much reflection. From *my* people came every misfortune that has crushed *yours*. Your father's long life of suffering—told in his own words—his diaries—revealed in the letters from his friends—I have read them over and over—was caused by this fatal connection. Are these things to be forgotten? or are you cruel enough to ask me to repeat the experiment that broke your mother's heart, and left your father friendless and forsaken? Where is your pride, sir? And if *you* have none, where would be mine, if I were to listen to you?"

"There comes the truth!" cried he, wildly. "It is your pride that rejects me. You who have lived in great houses and mixed with great people, cannot see in me anything but the sailor."

"Oh! no, no, no!" cried she, bitterly.

"I know it—I feel it, Kate," continued he. "I feel ashamed when my coarse hand touches your taper fingers. I shrink back with misgiving at any little familiarity that seems so inconsistent between us. Even my love for you—and God knows how I love you!—cannot make me think myself your equal!"

"Oh, Harry, do not say such things as these; do not—do not!"

"I say it—I swear it; the highest ambition of my heart would be to think I could deserve you."

She hid her face between her hands, and he went on, madly, wildly, incoherently; now telling her what her love might make him—now darkly hinting at the despair rejection might drive him to. He contrasted all the qualities of *her* gifted nature, so sure to attract friendship and interest, with the ruggedness of his character, as certain to render him friendless; and on his knees at her feet, he implored her, if any gratitude for all his father's love could move her, to take pity on and hear him.

There was a step on the stair as Harry seized her hand and said, "Let this be mine, Kate; give it to me, and make me happier than all I ever dreamed of. One word—one word, dearest." And he drew her face towards him and kissed her.

"The Luttrell spirit is low enough, I take it, now," said she, blushing. "If their pride can survive this, no peasant blood can be their remedy."

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